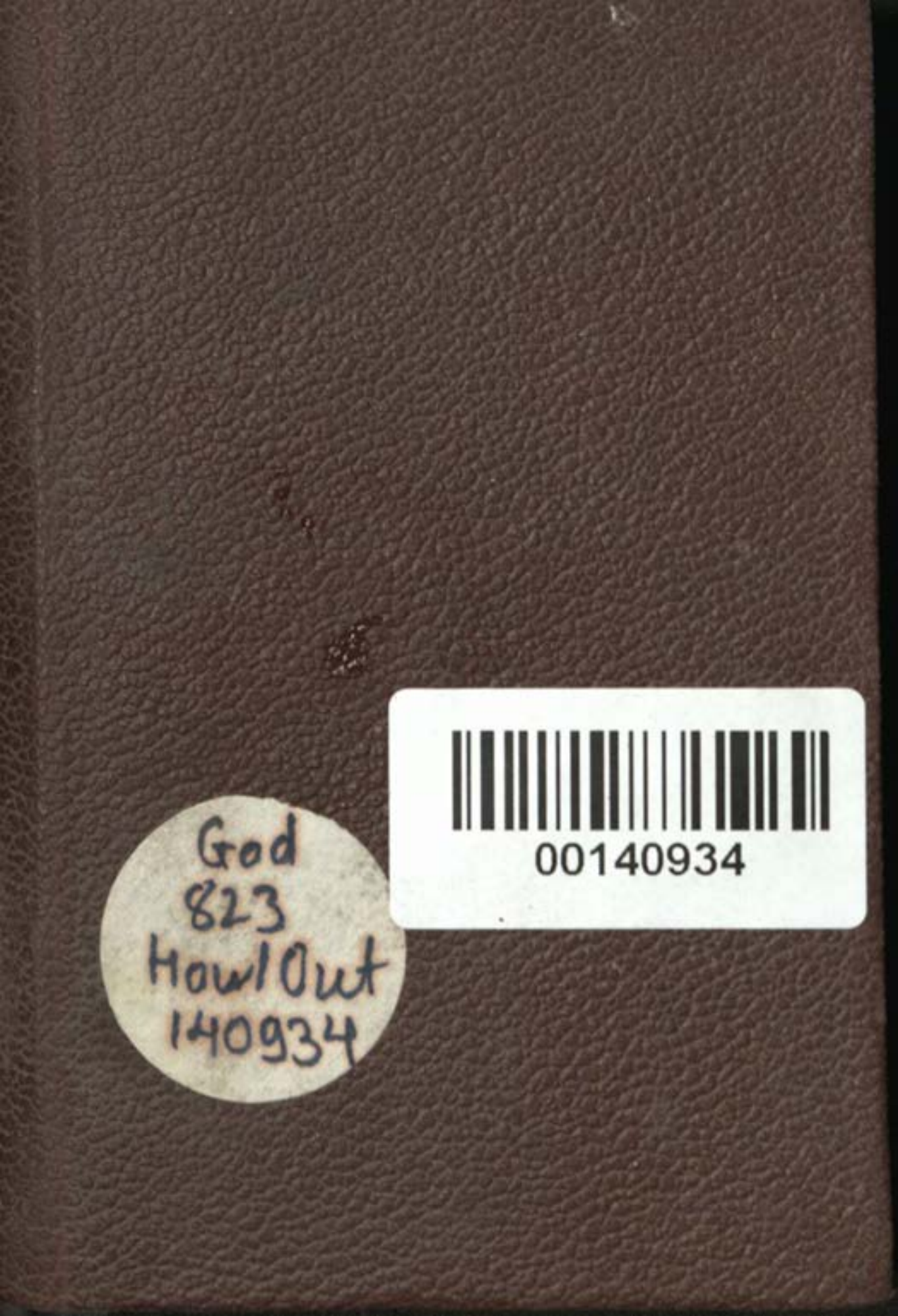
00140934
God
823
HowlOut
140934

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

OUT OF THE QUESTION

A COMEDY.

MR. W. D. HOWELLS'S WORKS.

POCKET EDITION, IN ONE SHILLING VOLUMES.

A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

A COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENT.

THE PARLOUR CAR.

THEIR WEDDING JOURNEY.

THE LADY OF THE AROOSTOOK, 2

OUT OF THE QUESTION, and

AT THE SIGN OF THE SAVAGE.

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY, 2 vols.

A FEARFUL RESPONSIBILITY.

VENETIAN LIFE, 2 vols.

ITALIAN JOURNEYS, 2 vols.

EDINBURGH: DAVID DOUGLAS.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND Co.

OUT OF THE QUESTION

AND

AT THE SIGN OF THE SAVAGE

B2368

BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

Author's Edition

KX-h 49

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET
1884

KXh498
143934

God
823
How/Out
140934

Edinburgh University Press
T. AND A. CONSTABLE, PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY.

CONTENTS.

OUT OF THE QUESTION.

	PAGE
I. IN THE PARLOUR OF THE PONKWASSET HOTEL,	7
II. "IN FAYRE FOREST,"	41
III. A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING,	69
IV. MRS. MURRAY'S TRIUMPH,	10[illegible]
V. BLAKE'S SAVING DOUBT,	[illegible]
VI. MR. CHARLES BELLINGHAM'S DIPLOMACY,	

AT THE SIGN OF THE SAVAGE,

I.

IN THE PARLOUR OF THE PONKWASSET HOTEL.

I.

Miss Maggie Wallace *and* Miss Lilly Roberts.

THE Ponkwasset Hotel stands on the slope of a hill and fronts the irregular mass of Ponkwasset Mountain, on which the galleries and northern windows of the parlour look out. The parlour is furnished with two hair-cloth sofas, two hair-cloth easy-chairs, and cane-seated chairs of divers patterns; against one side of the room stands a piano, near either end of which a door opens into the corridor; in the centre of the parlour a marble-topped table supports a state-lamp of kerosene,—a perfume by day, a flame by night,—and near this table sit two young ladies with what they call work in their hands and laps.

Miss Maggie Wallace, with her left wrist curved in the act of rolling up a part of her work, at which she looks down with a very

thoughtful air and a careworn little sigh.—"I don't think I shall cut it bias, after all, Lilly."

Miss Lilly Roberts, letting her work fall into her lap in amazement.—"Why, Maggie!"

Maggie.—"No. Or at least I shan't decide to do so till I've had Leslie's opinion on it. *She* has *perfect* taste, and she could tell at a glance whether it would do."

Lilly.—"I wonder she isn't here, now. The stage must be very late."

Maggie.—"I suppose the postmaster at South Herodias waited to finish his supper before he 'changed the mail,' as they call it. I *was* so in hopes she would come while they were at *tea!* It will *so* disgust her to see them all strung along the piazza and staring their eyes out at the arrivals, when the stage drives up,"—a horrible picture which Miss Wallace dreamily contemplates for a moment in mental vision.

Lilly.—"Why don't you go down, too, Maggie? Perhaps she'd find a familiar face a relief."

Maggie, recalled to herself by the wild suggestion.—"Thank you, Lilly. I'd rather not be thought so vulgar as *that*, by Leslie

Bellingham, if it 's quite the same to other friends. Imagine her catching sight of me in that crowd! I should simply wither away."

Lilly, rebelliously.—"Well, I don't see why she should feel authorised to overawe people in that manner. What does she do to show her immense superiority?"

Maggie.—"Everything! In the first place she 's so refined and cultivated, you can't live; and then she takes your breath away, she 's so perfectly lovely; and then she kills you dead with her style, and all that. She isn't the least stiff. She 's the kindest to other people you ever saw, and the carefullest of their feelings; and she has the grandest principles, and she 's *divinely* impulsive! But somehow you feel that if you do anything that 's a little vulgar in her presence, you 'd better die at once. It was always so at school, and it always will be. Why, you would no more dare to do or say anything just a little common, don't you know, with Leslie Bellingham"— A young lady, tall, slender, and with an air of delicate distinction, has appeared at the door of the parlour. She is of that type of beauty which approaches the English, without losing the

American fineness and grace ; she is fair, and her eyes are rather grey than blue ; her nose is slightly aquiline ; her expression is serious, but becomes amused as she listens to Miss Wallace. She wears one of those blonde travelling costumes, whose general fashionableness she somehow subdues into character with herself ; over her arm she carries a shawl. She drifts lightly into the room. At the rustling of her dress Miss Wallace looks up, and with a cry of surprise and ecstasy springs from her chair, scattering the contents of her work-box in every direction over the floor, and flings herself into Miss Leslie Bellingham's embrace. Then she starts away from her and gazes rapturously into her face, while they prettily clasp hands and hold each other at arm's length.—"Leslie ! You heard every word !"

II.

Miss Leslie Bellingham, Maggie, *and* Lilly.

Leslie.—"Every syllable, my child. And when you came to my grand principles, I simply said to myself, 'Then listening at keyholes is heroic,' and kept on eavesdropping without a murmur. Had you quite finished?"

Maggie.—"O Leslie! You know I *never* can finish when I get on that subject! It inspires me to greater and greater flights *every minute.* Where *is* your *mother?* Where *is* Mrs. Murray? Where is the *stage?* Why, excuse me! This is Miss Roberts. Lilly, it 's Leslie Bellingham! *Oh,* how glad I am to see you together at last! Didn't the stage"—

Leslie, having graciously bowed to Miss Roberts.—"No, Maggie. The stage didn't bring me here. I walked."

Maggie.—"Why, Leslie! How perfectly ghastly!"

Leslie.—"The stage has done nothing but disgrace itself ever since we left the station. In the first place it pretended to carry ten or twelve people and their baggage, with two horses. Four horses oughtn't to drag such a load up these precipices; and wherever the driver would stop for me, I insisted upon getting out to walk."

Maggie.—"How like you, Leslie!"

Leslie.—"Yes; I wish the resemblance were not so striking. I'm here in character, Maggie, if you like, but almost nothing else. I've nothing but a hand-bag to bless me with for the next twenty-four hours. Shall you be very much ashamed of me?"

Maggie.—"Why, you don't mean to say you've lost your trunks? Horrors!"

Leslie.—"No. I mean that I wasn't going to let the driver add them to the cruel load he had already, and I made him leave them at the station till to-morrow night."

Maggie, embracing her.—"Oh, you dear, good, grand, generous Leslie! How — Why, but Leslie! He'll have *just* as many people to-morrow night, and your trunks besides theirs!"

Leslie, with decision.—"Very well! Then I shall not be there to see the outrage. I will not have suffering or injustice of any kind inflicted in my presence, if I can help it. That is all." Nevertheless, Miss Bellingham sinks into one of the arm-chairs with an air of some dismay, and vainly taps the toe of her boot with the point of her umbrella in a difficult interval of silence.

Maggie, finally.—"But where is your hand-bag?"

Leslie, with mystery.—"Oh, *he's* bringing it."

Maggie.—"He?"

Leslie, with reviving spirits.—"A young man, the good genius of the drive. He's bringing it from the foot of the hill; the stage had its final disaster there; and I left him in charge of mamma and aunt Kate, and came on to explore and surprise, and he made me leave the bag with him, too. But that isn't the worst. I shall know what to do with the hand-bag when it gets here, but I shan't know what to do with the young man."

Maggie.—"With the young man? Why, Leslie, a young man is worth a *thousand* hand-bags in a place like this! You don't know

what you 're talking about, Leslie. A young man"—

Leslie, rising and going toward the window.—"My dear, he 's out of the question. You may as well make up your mind to that, for you 'll see at once that he 'll never do. He 's going to stop here, and as he 's been very kind to us it makes his never doing all the harder to manage. He 's a hero, if you like, but if you can imagine it, he isn't quite—well, what you 've been used to. Don't you see how a person could be everything that was unselfish and obliging, and yet not—not"—

Maggie, eagerly.—"Oh yes!"

Leslie.—"Well, he 's that. It seems to me that he 's been doing something for mamma, or aunt Kate, or me, ever since we left the station. To begin with, he gave up his place inside to one of us, and when he went to get on top, he found all the places taken there; and so he had to sit on the trunks behind—whenever he rode; for he walked most of the way, and helped me over the bad places in the road when I insisted on getting out. You know how aunt Kate is, Maggie, and how many wants she has. Well, there wasn't one of them that this

young man didn't gratify: he handed her bag up to the driver on top because it crowded her, and handed it down because she couldn't do without it; he got her out and put her back so that she could face the front, and then restored her to her place because an old gentleman who had been travelling a long way kept falling asleep on her shoulder; he buttoned her curtain down because she was sure it was going to rain, and rolled it up because it made the air too close; he fetched water for her; he looked every now and then to see if her trunks were all right, and made her more and more ungrateful every minute. Whenever the stage broke down—as it did twice before the present smash-up—he befriended everybody, encouraged old ladies, quieted children, and shamed the other men into trying to be of some use; and if it hadn't been for him, I don't see how the stage would ever have got out of its troubles; he always knew just what was the matter, and just how to mend it. Is that the window that commands a magnificent prospect of Ponkwasset Mountain—in the advertisement?"

Maggie.—"The very window!"

Leslie.—"Does it condescend to overlook

so common a thing as the road up to the house?"

Maggie.—"Of course; but why?"

Leslie, going to the open window, and stepping through it upon the gallery, whither the other young ladies follow her, and where her voice is heard.—"Yes, there they come! But I can't see my young man. Is it possible that he's riding? No, there he is! He was on the other side of the stage. Don't you see him? Why, he needn't *carry* my hand-bag! He certainly might have let *that* ride. I do wonder what he means by it! Or is it only absent-mindedness? *Don't* let him see us looking! It would be altogether too silly. *Do* let's go in!"

Maggie, on their return to the parlour.—"What a great pity it is that he won't do! Is he handsome, Leslie? Why won't he do?"

Leslie.—"You can tell in a moment, when you've seen him, Maggie. He's perfectly respectful and nice, of course, but he's no more social perspective than—the man in the moon. He's never obtrusive, but he's as free and equal as the Declaration of Independence; and when you did get up some little perspective with him, and tried to let

him know, don't you know, that there was such a thing as a vanishing point somewhere, he was sure to do or say something so unconscious that away went your perspective — one simple crush."

Maggie.—"How ridiculous!"

Leslie.—"Yes. It was funny. But not just in that way. He isn't in the least common or uncouth. *Nobody* could say that. But he 's going to be here two or three weeks, and it 's impossible not to be civil; and it 's very embarrassing, don't you see?"

Lilly.—"Let me comfort you, Miss Bellingham. It will be the simplest thing in the world. We 're all on the same level in the Ponkwasset Hotel. The landlord will bring him up during the evening and introduce him. Our table girls teach school in the winter and are as good as anybody. Mine calls me 'Lilly,' and I 'm so small I can't help it. They dress up in the afternoon, and play the piano. The cook 's as affable, when you meet her in society, as can be."

Maggie.—"Lilly!"

Leslie, listening to Miss Roberts with whimsical trepidation. —"Well, this certainly complicates matters. But I think we shall be able to manage." At a sound of

voices in the hall without, Miss Bellingham starts from her chair and runs to the corridor, where she is heard.—"Thanks ever so much. So very good of you to take all this trouble. Come into the parlour, mamma—there's nobody there but Maggie Wallace and Miss Roberts—and we'll leave our things there till after tea." She re-enters the parlour with her mother and her aunt Kate, Mrs. Murray; after whom comes Stephen Blake with Leslie's bag in his hand, and the wraps of the other ladies over his arm. His dress, which is evidently a prosperous fortuity of the clothing-store, takes character from his tall, sinewy frame; a smile of somewhat humorous patience lights his black eyes and shapes his handsome moustache, as he waits in quiet self-possession the pleasure of the ladies.

III.

MRS. BELLINGHAM, MRS. MURRAY, *and the* YOUNG GIRLS.

Mrs. Bellingham, a matronly, middle-aged lady of comfortable, not cumbrous bulk, taking Miss Wallace by the hand and kissing her.—"My dear child, how pleasant it is to see you so strong again! You 're a living testimony to the excellence of the air! How well you look!"

Leslie.—"Mamma,—Miss Roberts." Mrs. Bellingham murmurously shakes hands with Miss Roberts, and after some kindly nods and smiles, and other shows of friendliness, provisionally and expectantly quiesces into a corner of the sofa, while her sister-in-law comes aggressively forward to assume the burden of conversation.

Mrs. Murray.—"Well, a more fatiguing drive I certainly never knew! How do you do, Maggie?" She kisses Miss Wallace in

a casual, uninterested way, and takes Lilly's hand. '"Isn't this Miss Roberts? I am Mrs. Murray. I used to know your family —your uncle George, before that dreadful business of his. I believe it all came out right; he wasn't to blame; but it was a shocking experience." Mrs. Murray turns from Lilly, and refers herself to the company in general: "It seems as if I should expire on the spot. I feel as if I had been packed away in my own hat-box for a week, and here, just as we arrive, the landlord informs us that he didn't expect us till to-morrow night, and he hasn't an empty room in the house!"

Maggie.—"No room! To-morrow night! What nonsense! Why, it's perfectly frantic! How could he have misunderstood? Why, it seems to me that I've done *nothing* for a week past but tell him you were coming to-night!"

Mrs. Murray, sharply.—"I have no doubt of it. But it doesn't alter the state of the case. You may tell us to leave our things till *after tea*, Leslie. If they can't make up beds on the sofas and the piano, I don't know where we're going to pass the night." In the moment of distressful sensation which

follows, Miss Wallace whispers something eagerly to her friend, Miss Roberts.

Maggie, with a laughing glance at Leslie and her mother, and then going on with her whispering.—"Excuse the little confidence!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Conspiracy, I'm afraid. What are you plotting, Maggie?"

Maggie, finishing her confidence.—"Oh, we needn't make a mystery of such a little thing. We're going to offer you one of our rooms."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"My dear, you are going to do nothing of the kind. We will never allow it."

Maggie.—"Now, Mrs. Bellingham, you break my heart! It's nothing, it's less than nothing. *I* believe we can make room for all three of you."

Mrs. Murray, promptly.—"Let me go with you, young ladies. I'm an old housekeeper, and I can help you plan."

Maggie.—"Oh do, Mrs. Murray. You can tell which room you'd better take, Lilly's or mine. Lilly's is"—

Mrs. Murray.—"Oh! I had forgotten that we were detaining you!" Mrs. Murray is about to leave the room with the two young

girls, when her eye falls upon Blake, who is still present, with his burden of hand-bags and shawls. "Leave the things on the table, please. We are obliged to you." Mrs. Murray speaks with a certain finality of manner and tone which there is no mistaking; Blake stares at her a moment, and then, without replying, lays down the things and turns to quit the room; at the same instant Leslie rises with a grand air from her mother's side, on the sofa, and sweeps towards him.

Leslie, very graciously.—"Don't let our private afflictions drive you from a public room, Mr.—"

Blake.—"Blake."

Leslie.—"Mr. Blake. This is my mother, Mr. Blake, who wishes to thank you for all your kindness to us."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes, indeed, Mr. Blake, we are truly grateful to you."

Leslie, with increasing significance.—"And my aunt, Mrs. Murray; and my friend, Miss Wallace; and Miss Roberts." Blake bows to each of the ladies as they are named, but persists in his movement to quit the room; Leslie impressively offers him her hand. "*Must* you go? Thank you ever, ever so

much!" She follows him to the door in his withdrawal, and then turns and confronts her aunt with an embattled front of defiance.

Maggie, with an effort breaking the embarrassing silence.—"Come, Lilly. Let us go and take a look at our resources. We'll be back in a moment, Mrs. Bellingham.'

IV.

MRS. BELLINGHAM *and* LESLIE; *afterwards* MRS. MURRAY *and* MAGGIE.

Leslie, coming abruptly forward as her aunt goes out with the two young girls, and drooping meekly in front of her mother, who remains seated on the sofa.—"Well, mamma!"

Mrs. Bellingham, tranquilly contemplating her for a moment.—"Well, Leslie!" She pauses, and again silently regards her daughter. "Perhaps you may be said to have overdone it."

Leslie, passionately.—"I can't help it, mother! I couldn't see him sent away in that insolent manner, I don't care who or what he is. Aunt Kate's tone was outrageous, atrocious, hideous! And after accepting, yes, *demanding* every service he could possibly render, the whole afternoon!

It made me blush for her, and I wasn't going to stand it."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"If you mean by all that that your poor aunt is a very ungracious and exacting woman, I shall not dispute you. But she's your father's sister; and she's very much older than you. You seem to have forgotten, too, that your mother was present to do any justice that was needed. It's very unfortunate that he should have been able to do us so many favours, but that can't be helped now. It's one of the risks of coming to these out-of-the-way places, that you're so apt to be thrown in with nondescript people that you don't know how to get rid of afterwards. And now that he's been so cordially introduced to us all! Well, I hope you won't have to be crueller in the end, my dear, than your aunt meant to be in the beginning. So far, of course, he has behaved with perfect delicacy; but you must see yourself, Leslie, that even as a mere acquaintance he's quite out of the question; that however kind and thoughtful he's been, and no one could have been more so, he isn't a gentleman."

Leslie, impatiently.—"Well, then, mother, I am! And so are you. And I think we are

bound to behave like gentlemen at any cost. I didn't mean to ignore you. I didn't consider. I acted as I thought Charley would have done."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Oh, my dear, my dear! Don't you see there 's a very important difference? Your brother is a man, and he can act without reference to consequences. But you are a young lady, and you can't be as gentlemanly as you like without being liable to misinterpretation. I shall expect you to behave very discreetly indeed from this time forth. We must consider now how our new friend can be kindly, yet firmly and promptly dropped."

Leslie.—"Oh, it 's another of those embarrassments that aunt Kate 's always getting me into! I *was* discreet about it till she acted so horridly. You can ask Maggie if I didn't talk in the wisest way about it; like a perfect—owl. I saw it just as you do, mamma, and I *was* going to drop him, and so I will, yet; but I couldn't see him so ungratefully trampled on. It 's *all* her doing! Who wanted to come here to this out-of-the-way place? Why, aunt Kate,—when I was eager to go to Conway! I declare it 's too bad!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"That will do, Leslie."

Leslie.—"And now she's gone off with those poor girls to crowd them out of house and home, I suppose. It's a shame! Why did you let her, mamma?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"For the same reason that I let you talk on, my dear, when I've bidden you stop."

Leslie.—"Oh, you dear, kind old mamma, you! *You're* a gentleman, and you always were! I only wish I could be half like you!" She throws her arms round her mother's neck and kisses her. "I know you're right about this matter, but you mustn't expect me to acknowledge that aunt Kate is. If you both said exactly the same thing, you would be right and she would be wrong, you'd say it so differently!"

Mrs. Murray, who returns alone with signs of discontent and perplexity, and flings herself into a chair.—"Their rooms are mere coops, and I don't see how even two of us are to squeeze into one of them. It's little better than impertinence to offer it to us. I've been down to see the landlord again, and you'll be pleased to know, Marion, that the only vacant room in the house had been engaged by the person to whom we've all just had the honour of an introduction."

Leslie makes an impetuous movement, as if she were about to speak, but at a gesture from her mother she restrains herself, and Mrs. Murray continues: "Of course, if he had been a gentleman, in the lowest sense of the word, he would have offered his room to ladies who had none, at once. As long as he could make social capital out of his obtrusive services to us he was very profuse with them, but as soon as it came to a question of real self-sacrifice—to giving up his own ease and comfort for a single night"— A bell rings, and at the sound Mrs. Bellingham rises.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I suppose that 's for supper. I think a cup of tea will put a cheerfuller face on our affairs. I don't at all agree with you about Mr. Blake's obligation to give up his room, nor about his services to us this afternoon; I 'm sure common justice requires us to acknowledge that he was everything that was kind and thoughtful. Oh, you good child!"—as Miss Wallace appears at the door,—"have you come to show us the way to supper? Are you quite sure you 've not gone without tea on our account as well as given up your room?" She puts her arm fondly round the young girl's waist,

and presses her cheek against her own breast.

Maggie, with enthusiasm.—"Oh, Mrs. Bellingham, you know I wouldn't ask anything better than to starve on your account. I wish I *hadn't* been to tea! I'm afraid that you'll think the room is a very slight offering when you come to see it—it *is* such a little room; why, when I took Mrs. Murray into it, it seemed all at once as if I saw it through the wrong end of an opera-glass—it did dwindle so!"

Leslie.—"Never mind, Maggie; you're only too good, as it is. If your room was an inch bigger, we couldn't bear it. I hope you may be without a roof over your head yourself, some day! Can I say anything handsomer than that? Don't wait for me, mamma; I'll find the dining-room myself. I'm rather too crumpled even for a houseless wanderer." She opens her bag where it stands on the table. "I am going to make a flying toilet at one of these glasses. Do you think any one will come in, Maggie?"

Maggie.—"There isn't the least danger. This is the parlour of the 'transients,' as they call them,—the occasional guests,—and Lilly and I have it mostly to ourselves when

there are no transients. The regular boarders stay in the lower parlour. Shan't I help you, Leslie?"

Leslie, rummaging through her bag.—"No, indeed! It's only a question of brush and hair-pins. Do go with mamma!" As Maggie obeys, Leslie finds her brush, and going to one of the mirrors touches the blonde masses of her hair, and then remains a moment, lightly turning her head from side to side to get the effect. She suddenly claps her hand to one ear. "Oh, horrors! That ear-drop's gone again!" She runs to the table, re-opens her bag, and searches it in every part, talking rapidly to herself. "Well, really, it seems as if sorrows would never end! To think of that working out a third time! To think of my coming away without getting the clasp fixed! And to think of my not leaving them in my trunk at the station! Oh dear me, I shall certainly go wild! What *shall* I do? It isn't in the bag at all. It *must* be on the floor." Keeping her hand in helpless incredulity upon the ear from which the jewel is missing, she scrutinises the matting far and near, with a countenance of acute anguish. Footsteps are heard approaching the door, where

they hesitatingly arrest themselves. "Have you come back for me? Oh, I've met with *such* a calamity! I've lost one of my earrings. I could cry. Do come and help me mouse for it." There is no response to this invitation, and Leslie, lifting her eyes, in a little dismay confronts the silent intruder. "Mr. Blake!"

V.

LESLIE *and* BLAKE.

Blake.—"Excuse me. I expected to find your mother here. I didn't mean to disturb"

Leslie, haughtily.—"There 's no disturbance. It 's a public room: I had forgotten that. Mamma has gone to tea. I thought it was my friend Miss Wallace. I"— With a flash of indignation: "When you knew it wasn't, why did you let me speak to you in that way?"

Blake, with a smile.—"I couldn't know whom you took me for, and I hadn't time to prevent your speaking."

Leslie.—"You remained."

Blake, with a touch of resentment tempering his amusement.—"I couldn't go away after I had come without speaking to you. It was Mrs. Bellingham I was looking for. I 'm sorry not to find her, and I 'll go, now."

Leslie, hastily.—"Oh no! I beg your pardon. I didn't mean"—

Blake, advancing toward her, and stooping to pick up something from the floor, near the table.—"Is this what you lost?—if I've a right to know that you lost anything."

Leslie.—"Oh, my ear-ring! Oh, thanks! How did you see it? I thought I had looked and felt everywhere." A quick colour flies over her face as she takes the jewel from the palm of his hand. She turns to the mirror, and, seizing the tip of her delicate ear between the thumb and forefinger of one hand, hooks the pendant *into* place with the other, and then gives her head a little shake; the young man lightly sighs. She turns toward him, with the warmth still lingering in her cheeks. "I'm ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Blake. I wish I had your gift of doing all sorts of services—favours—to people. I wish I could find something for you."

Blake.—"I wish you could—if it were the key to my room, which I came back in hopes of finding. I've mislaid it somewhere, and I thought I might have put it down with your shawls here on the table." Leslie promptly lifts one of the shawls, and the

key drops from it. "That 's it. Miss Bellingham, I have a favour to ask: will you give this key to your mother?"

Leslie.—"This key?"

Blake.—"I have found a place to sleep at a farm-house just down the road, and I want your mother to take my room; I haven't looked into it yet, and I don't know that it 's worth taking. But I suppose it 's better than no room at all; and I know you have none."

Leslie, with cold hauteur, after looking absently at him for a moment.—"Thanks. It 's quite impossible. My mother would never consent."

Blake.—"The room will stand empty, then. I meant to give it up from the first, —as soon as I found that you were not provided for,—but I hated to make a display of it before all the people down there in the office. I 'll go now and leave the key with the landlord, as I ought to have done, without troubling you. But—I had hardly the chance of doing so after we came here."

Leslie, with enthusiasm.—"Oh, Mr. Blake, do you really mean to give us your room after you 've been so odiously— Oh, it 's too bad; it 's too bad! You mustn't; no, you shall not."

Blake.—"I will leave the key on the table here. Good-night. Or—I shall not see you in the morning: perhaps I had better say good-bye."

Leslie.—"Good-bye? In the morning?"

Blake.—"I've changed my plans, and I'm going away to-morrow. Good-bye."

Leslie.—"Going— Mamma will be very sorry to— Oh, Mr. Blake, I hope you are not going because— But indeed— I want you to believe"—

Blake, devoutly.—"I believe it. Good-bye!" He turns away to go, and Leslie, standing bewildered and irresolute, lets him leave the room; then she hastens to the door after him, and encounters her mother.

VI.

MRS. BELLINGHAM *and* LESLIE ; *then* MRS. MURRAY.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Well, Leslie. Are you quite ready? We went to look at Maggie's room before going down to tea. It 's small, but we shall manage somehow Come, dear. She 's waiting for us at the head of the stairs. Why, Leslie!"

Leslie, touching her handkerchief to her eyes.—"I was a little overwrought, mamma. I 'm tired." After a moment: "Mamma, Mr. Blake"—

Mrs. Bellingham, with a look at her daughter.—"I met him in the hall."

Leslie.—"Yes, he has been here; and I thought I had lost one of my ear-rings; and of course he found it on the floor the instant he came in; and"—

Mrs. Murray, surging into the room, and going up to the table.—"Well, Marion, the

tea— What key is this? What in the world is Leslie crying about?"

Leslie, with supreme disregard of her aunt, and adamantine self-control.—"Mr. Blake had come"—she hands the key to Mrs. Bellingham—"to offer you the key of his room. He asked me to give it."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"The key of his room?"

Leslie.—"He offers you his room; he had always meant to offer it."

Mrs. Bellingham, gravely.—"Mr. Blake had no right to know that we had no room. It is too great a kindness. We can't accept it, Leslie. I hope you told him so, my dear."

Leslie.—"Yes, mamma. But he said he was going to lodge at one of the farm-houses in the neighbourhood, and the room would be vacant if you didn't take it. I couldn't prevent his leaving the key."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"That is all very well. But it doesn't alter the case, as far as we are concerned. It is very good of Mr. Blake, but after what has occurred, it 's simply impossible. We can't take it."

Mrs. Murray.—"Occurred? Not take it? Of *course* we will take it, Marion! I certainly am astonished. The man will get a

much better bed at the farmer's than he 's accustomed to. You talk as if it were some act of self-sacrifice. I 've no doubt he 's made the most of it. I 've no doubt he 's given it an effect of heroism—or tried to. But that you should fall in with his vulgar conception of the affair, Marion, and Leslie should be affected to tears by his magnanimity, is a little too comical. One would think, really, that he had imperilled life and limb on our account. All this sentiment about a room on the third floor! Give the key to me, Marion." She possesses herself of it from Mrs. Bellingham's passive hand. "Leslie will wish to stay with you, so as to be near her young friends. *I* will occupy this vacant room."

II.

"IN FAYRE FOREST."

I.

Two Tramps.

Under the shelter of some pines near a lonely by-road, in the neighbourhood of the Ponkwasset Hotel, lie two tramps asleep. One of them, having made his bed of the pine-boughs, has pillowed his head upon the bundle he carries by day; the other is stretched, face downward, on the thick brown carpet of pine-needles. The sun, which strikes through the thin screen of the trees upon the bodies of the two men, is high in the heavens. The rattle of wheels is heard from time to time on the remoter highway; the harsh clatter of a kingfisher, poising over the water, comes from the direction of the river near at hand. A squirrel descends the trunk of an oak near the pines under which the men lie, and at sight of them stops, barks harshly, and then, as one of them stirs in his sleep, whisks back into the top of the

oak. It is the luxurious tramp on the pine-boughs who stirs, and who alertly opens his eyes and sits up in his bed, as if the noisy rush of the squirrel had startled him from his sleep.

First Tramp, casting a malign glance at the top of the oak.—"If I had a fair shot at you with this club, my fine fellow, I'd break you of that trick of waking people before the bell rings in the morning, and I'd give 'em broiled squirrel for breakfast when they did get up." He takes his bundle into his lap, and, tremulously untying it, reveals a motley heap of tatters; from these he searches out a flask, which he holds against the light, shakes at his ear, and inverts upon his lips. "Not a drop; not a square smell, even! I dreamt it." He lies down with a groan, and remains with his head pillowed in his hands. Presently he reaches for his stick, and again rising to a sitting posture strikes his sleeping comrade across the shoulders. "Get up!"

Second Tramp, who speaks with a slight brogue, briskly springing to his feet, and rubbing his shoulders.—"And what for, my strange bedfellow?"

First Tramp.—"For breakfast. What do people generally get up for in the morning?"

Second Tramp.—"Upon my soul, I'd as soon have had mine in bed; I've a day of leisure before me. And let me say a word to you, my friend: the next time you see a gentleman dreaming of one of the most elegant repasts in the world, and just waiting for his stew to cool, don't you intrude upon him with that little stick of yours. I don't care for a stroke or two in sport, but when I think of the meal I've lost, I could find it in my heart to break your head for you, you ugly brute. Have you got anything to eat there in your wardrobe?"

First Tramp.—"Not a crumb."

Second Tramp.—"Or to drink?"

First Tramp.—"Not a drop."

Second Tramp.—"Or to smoke?"

First Tramp.—"No."

Second Tramp.—"Faith, you're nearer a broken head than ever, me friend. Wake a man out of a dream of that sort!"

First Tramp.—"I've had enough of this. What do you intend to do?"

Second Tramp.—"I'm going to assume the character of an impostor, and pretend at the next farm-house that I haven't had any breakfast, and haven't any money to buy one. It's a bare-faced deceit, I know, but"—look-

ing down at his broken shoes and tattered clothes—"I flatter myself that I dress the part pretty well. To be sure, the women are not as ready to listen as they were once. The tramping-trade is overdone ; there 's too many in it ; the ladies can't believe we 're all destitute ; it don't stand to reason."

First Tramp.—"I 'm tired of the whole thing."

Second Tramp.—"I don't like it myself. But there 's worse things. There 's work, for example. By my soul, there 's nothing disgusts me like these places where they tell you to go out and hoe potatoes, and your breakfast will be ready in an hour. I never could work with any more pleasure on an empty stomach than a full one. And the poor devils always think they 've done something so fine when they say that, and the joke 's so stale ! I can tell them I 'm not to be got rid of so easy. I 'm not the lazy, dirty vagabond I look, at all ; I 'm the inevitable result of the conflict between labour and capital ; I 'm the logical consequence of the prevailing corruption. I read it on the bit of newspaper they gave me round my dinner, yesterday ; it was cold beef of a quality that you don't often find in the country."

First Tramp, sullenly.—"I 'm sick of the whole thing. I 'm going out of it."

Second Tramp.—"And what 'll you do? Are you going to work?"

First Tramp.—"To work? No! To steal."

Second Tramp.—"Faith, I don't call that going out of it, then. It 's quite in the line of business. You 're no bad dab at a hen-roost, now, as I know very well; and for any little thing that a gentleman can shove under his coat, while the lady of the house has her back turned buttering his lunch for him, I don't know the man I 'd call master."

First Tramp.—"If I could get a man to tell me the time of day by a watch I liked, I 'd as lief knock him over as look at him."

Second Tramp.—"Oh, if it 's highway robbery you mean, partner, I don't follow you."

First Tramp.—"What 's the difference?"

Second Tramp.—"Not much, if you take it one way, but a good deal if you take it another. It 's the difference between petty larceny and grand larceny; it 's the difference between three months in the House of Correction and ten years in the State's Prison, if you 're caught, not to mention the risks of the profession."

First Tramp.—"I'd take the risks if I saw my chance." He lies down with his arms crossed under his head, and stares up into the pine. His comrade glances at him, and then moves stiffly out from the shelter of the trees, and, shading his eyes with one hand, peers down the road.

Second Tramp.—"I didn't know but I might see your chance, partner. You wouldn't like an old gentleman with a load of potatoes to begin on, would ye? There's one just gone up the cross-road. And yonder goes an umbrella-mender. I'm afraid we shan't take any purses to speak of, in this neighbourhood. Whoosh! Wait a bit—here's somebody coming this way." The first tramp is sufficiently interested to sit up. "Faith, here's your chance at last, then, if you're in earnest, my friend; but it stands six feet in its stockings, and it carries a stick as well as a watch. I won't ask a share of the plunder, partner; I've rags enough of my own without wanting to divide your property with the gentleman coming." He goes back and lies down at the foot of one of the trees, while the other, who has risen from his pine-boughs, comes cautiously forward; after a glance at the

approaching wayfarer he flings away his cudgel, and, taking a pipe from his pocket, drops into a cringing attitude. The Irishman grins. In another moment Blake appears from under the cover of the woods and advances with long strides, striking with his stick at the stones in the road as he comes on, in an absent-minded fashion.

II.

BLAKE *and the* TRAMPS.

First Tramp.—"I say, mister!" Blake looks up, and his eye falls upon the squalid figure of the tramp; he stops. "Couldn't you give a poor fellow a little tobacco for his pipe? A smoke comes good, if you don't happen to know where you 're going to get your breakfast."

Second Tramp, coming forward, with his pipe in his hand.—"True for you, partner. A little tobacco in the hand is worth a deal of breakfast in the bush." Blake looks from one to the other, and then takes a paper of tobacco from his pocket and gives it to the first tramp, who helps himself and passes it to his comrade; the latter offers to return it after filling his pipe; Blake declines it with a wave of his hand, and walks on.

Second Tramp, calling after him.—"God bless you! May you never want it!"

First Tramp. — "Thank you, mister. *You're* a gentleman!"

Blake. — "All right." He goes out of sight under the trees down the road, and then suddenly reappears and walks up to the two tramps, who remain where he left them and are feeling in their pockets for a match. "Did one of you call me a gentleman?"

First Tramp. — "Yes, I did, mister. No offence in that, I hope?"

Blake. — "No, but why did you do it?"

First Tramp. — "Well, you didn't ask us why we didn't go to work; and you didn't say that men who hadn't any money to buy breakfast had better not smoke; and you gave us this tobacco. I'll call any man a gentleman that'll do that."

Blake. — "Oh, that's a gentleman, is it? All right." He turns to go away, when the second tramp detains him.

Second Tramp. — "Does your honour happen to have ever a match about you?" Blake takes out his match-case and strikes a light. "God bless your honour. You're a *real* gentleman."

Blake. — "Then this makes me a gentleman past a doubt?"

Second Tramp.—"Sure, it does that."

Blake.—"I 'm glad to have the matter settled." He walks on absently as before, and the tramps stand staring a moment in the direction in which he has gone.

Second Tramp, who goes back to the tree where he has been sitting and stretches himself out with his head on one arm for a quiet smoke.—"That 's a queer genius. By my soul, I 'd like to take the road in *his* company. Sure, I think there isn't the woman alive would be out of cold victuals and old clothes when he put that handsome face of his in at the kitchen window."

First Tramp, looking down the road.—"I wonder if that fellow could have a drop of spirits about him! I say, mister!" calling after Blake. "Hello, there, I say!"

Second Tramp.—"It 's too late, my worthy friend. He 'll never hear you; and it 's not likely he 'd come back to fill your flask for you, if he did. A gentleman of his character 'd think twice before he gave a tramp whiskey. Tobacco 's another thing." He takes out the half-paper of tobacco, and looks at the label on it. "What an extravagant dog! It 's the real cut-cavendish; and it smells as nice as it smokes. This luxury

is what's destroying the country.' 'With the present reckless expenditure in all classes of the population, and the prodigious influx of ignorant and degraded foreigners, there must be a constant increase of tramps.' True for you, Mr. Newspaper. 'Twould have been an act of benevolence to take his watch from him, partner, and he never could tell how fast he was going to ruin. But you can't always befriend a man six feet high and wiry as a cat." He offers to put the tobacco into his pocket again, when his comrade slouches up, and makes a clutch at it.

First Tramp.—"I want that."

Second Tramp.—"Why, so ye do!"

First Tramp.—"It's mine."

Second Tramp.—"I'm keeping it for ye."

First Tramp.—"I tell you the man gave it to me."

Second Tramp.—"And he wouldn't take it back from me. Ah, will you, ye brute?" The other seizes the wrist of the hand with which the Irishman holds the tobacco; they wrestle together, when women's voices are heard at some distance down the road. "Whoosh! Ladies coming." The first tramp listens, kneeling. The Irishman springs to his feet and thrusts the paper of

tobacco into his pocket, and, coming quickly forward, looks down the road. "Fortune favours the brave, partner! Here comes another opportunity—three of them, faith, and pretty ones at that! Business before pleasure; I'll put off that beating again; it's all the better for keeping. Besides, it's not the thing, quarrelling before ladies." He is about to crouch down again at the foot of the tree as before, when his comrade hastily gathers up his bundle, and seizing him by the arm drags him back into the thicket behind the pine-trees. After a moment or two, three young ladies come sauntering slowly along the road.

III.

LESLIE, MAGGIE, *and* LILLY; *then* LESLIE *alone.*

Lilly, delicately sniffing the air.—"Fee, fi, fo, fum; I smell the pipe of an Irishman."

Leslie.—"Never! I know the flavour of refined tobacco, thanks to a smoking brother. Oh, what a lonely road!"

Lilly.—"This loneliness is one of the charms of the Ponkwasset neighbourhood. When you're once out of sight of the hotel and the picnic-grounds you'd think you were a thousand miles away from civilisation. Not an empty sardine-box or a torn paper collar anywhere! This scent of tobacco is an unheard-of intrusion."

Maggie, archly.—"Perhaps Mr. Blake went this way. Does he smoke, Leslie?"

Leslie, coldly.—"How should I know, Maggie? A gentleman would hardly smoke in ladies' company—strange ladies." She

sinks down upon a log at the wayside, and gazes slowly about with an air of fastidious criticism that gradually changes to a rapture of admiration. "Well, I certainly think that, take it all in all, I never saw anything more fascinating. It's wonderful! This little nook itself, with that brown carpet of needles under the pines, and that heavy fringe of ferns there, behind those trunks; and then those ghostly birches stretching up and away, yonder—thousands of them! How tall and slim and stylish they are! And how they do march into the distance! I never saw such multitudes; and their lovely paleness makes them look as if one saw them by moonlight. Oh, oh! How perfectly divine! If one could only have their phantom-like procession painted! But Corot himself couldn't paint them. Oh, I *must* make some sort of memorandum—I won't have the presumption to call it a sketch." She takes a sketch-book from under her arm, and lays it on her knees, and then with her pencil nervously traces on the air the lines of the distant birches. "Yes; I *must*. I never shall see them so beautiful again! Just jot down a few lines, and wash in the background when I get to the hotel. But

girls; you mustn't stay! Go on and get the flowers, and I'll be done by the time you're back. I couldn't bear to have you overlooking me; I've all the sensitiveness of a great artist. Do go! But don't be gone long." She begins to work at her sketch, without looking at them.

Maggie.—"I'm *so* glad, Leslie. I knew you'd be perfectly fascinated with this spot, and so I didn't tell you about it. I wanted it to *burst* upon you."

Leslie, with a little impatient surprise, as if she had thought they were gone.—"Yes, yes; never mind. You did quite right. Don't stay long." She continues to sketch, looking up now and then at the scene before her; but not glancing at her companions, who walk away from her some paces, when Miss Wallace comes back.

Maggie.—"What time is it, Leslie? Leslie!"

Leslie, nervously.—"*Oh!* What a start you gave me." Glancing at her watch: "It's nine minutes past ten—I mean ten minutes past nine." Still without looking at her: "Be back soon."

Maggie.—"Oh, it isn't far." Again she turns away with Miss Roberts, but before

they are quite out of sight Leslie springs to her feet and runs after them.

Leslie.—"Oh, girls—girls!"

Maggie, anxiously, starting back toward her.—"What? What?"

Leslie, dreamily, as she returns to her place and sits down.—"Oh, nothing. I just happened to think." She closes her eyes to a narrow line, and looks up at the birches. "There are so many horrid stories in the papers. But of course there can't be any in this out-of-the-way place, so far from the cities."

Maggie.—"Any *what*, Leslie?"

Leslie, remotely.—"Tramps."

Maggie, scornfully.—"There never was such a thing heard of in the whole region."

Leslie.—"I thought not." She is again absorbed in study of the birches; and, after a moment of hesitation, the other two retreat down the road once more, lingering a little to look back in admiration of her picturesque devotion to art, and then vanishing under the flickering light and shadow. Leslie works diligently on, humming softly to herself, and pausing now and then to look at the birches, for which object she rises at times, and, gracefully bending from side to

side, or stooping forward to make sure of some effect that she has too slightly glimpsed, resumes her seat and begins anew. "No, that won't do!"—vigorously plying her india-rubber on certain lines of the sketch. "How stupid!" Then beginning to draw again, and throwing back her head for the desired distance on her sketch: "Ah, that's more like. Still, nobody could accuse it of slavish fidelity. Well!" She sings:—

"Through starry palm-roofs on Old Nile
The full-orbed moon looked clear;
The bulbul sang to the crocodile,
'Ah, why that bitter tear?'

"With thy tender breast against the thorn,
'Why that society-smile?'
The bird was mute. In silent scorn
Slow winked the crocodile."

"How perfectly ridiculous! *Slow winked.*"—Miss Bellingham alternately applies pencil and rubber—"*slow winked the croco*—I never shall get that right; it's too bad!—*dile.*" While she continues to sketch, and sing *da capo*, the tramps creep stealthily from their covert. Apparently in accordance with some preconcerted plan, the surlier and huger ruffian goes down the road in the direction taken by Leslie's friends, and the Irishman

stations himself unobserved at her side and supports himself with both hands resting upon the top of his stick, in an attitude of deferential patience and insinuating gallantry. She ceases singing and looks up.

IV.

THE YOUNG GIRLS *and the* TRAMPS.

Second Tramp.—"Not to be interrupting you, miss,"—Leslie stares at his grinning face in dumb and motionless horror,—"would ye tell a poor traveller the time of day, so that he needn't be eating his breakfast prematurely, if he happens to get any?"

First Tramp, from his station down the road, in a hoarse undertone.—"Snatch it out of her belt, you fool! Snatch it! He's coming back. Quick!" Leslie starts to her feet.

Second Tramp.—"Ye see, miss, my friend's impatient." Soothingly: "Just let me examine your watch. I give ye my honour I won't hurt you; don't lose your presence of mind, my dear; don't be frightened." As she shrinks back, he clutches at her watch-chain.

Leslie, in terror-stricken simplicity.—"Oh,

oh, no! Don't! Don't take my watch. My father gave it to me—and he 's dead."

Second Tramp.—"Then he 'll never miss it, my dear. Don't oblige me to be rude to a lady. Give it here, at once, that 's a dear."

First Tramp.—"Hurry, hurry! He 's coming!" As the Irishman seizes her by the wrist, Leslie utters one wild shriek after another, to which the other young girls respond, as they reappear under the trees down the road.

Maggie.—"Leslie, Leslie! What is it?"

Lilly, at sight of Leslie struggling with the tramp.—"Oh, help, help, help, somebody—do!"

Maggie.—"Murder!"

First Tramp, rushing past them to the aid of his fellow.—"Clap your hand over her mouth! Stop her noise, somehow! Choke her!" He springs forward, and while the Irishman stifles her cries with his hands, the other tears the watch-chain loose from its fastening. They suddenly release her, and as she reels gasping and swooning away, some one has the larger villain by the throat, who struggles with his assailant backward into the undergrowth, whence the crash of broken branches, with cries and curses,

makes itself heard. Following this tumult comes the noise of a rush through the ferns, and then rapid footfalls, as of flight and pursuit on the hard road, that die away in the distance, while Maggie and Lilly hang over Leslie, striving to make out from her incoherent moans and laments what has happened.

Maggie.—"Oh, Leslie, Leslie, Leslie, what was it? Do try to think! Do try to tell! Oh, I shall go wild if you don't tell what's the matter."

Leslie.—"Oh, it was—Oh, oh, I feel as if I should never be clean again! How *can* I endure it? That filthy hand on my mouth! Their loathsome rags, their sickening faces! Ugh! Oh, I shall dream of it as long as I live! Why, why did I ever come to this horrid place?"

Maggie.—"Leslie,—dear, good Leslie,—what *was* it all?"

Leslie, panting and sobbing.—"Oh, two horrid, disgusting men! Don't ask me! And they told me to give them my watch, and I begged them not to take it. And one was a hideous little Irish wretch, and he kept running all round me; and oh, dear! the other was worse than he was; yes, worse!

And he told him—oh, girls!—to choke me! And he came running up, and then the other put one of his hands over my mouth, and I couldn't breathe; and I thought I should die; but I wasn't going to let the wretches have my watch, if I could help it; and I kept struggling; and all at once they ran away, and"—putting her hand to her belt—"Oh, it's gone, it's gone, it's gone! Oh, papa, papa! The watch you gave me is gone!" She crouches down upon the log, and leaning her head upon her hands against the trunk of a tree gives way to her tears and sobs, while the others kneel beside her in helpless distress. On this scene Blake emerges from the road down which the steps were heard. His face is pale, and he advances with his right arm held behind him, while the left clasps something which he extends as he speaks.

V.

BLAKE *and the* YOUNG GIRLS.

Blake, after a pause in which he stands looking at Leslie, unheeded by the others.—"Here is your watch, Miss Bellingham."

Leslie, whirling swiftly round to her feet.—"My watch? Oh, where did you find it?" She springs towards him and joyfully seizing it from his hand scans it eagerly, and then kisses it in a rapture. "Safe, safe, safe! Not hurt the least! My precious gift! Oh, how glad I am! It 's even going yet! How did you get it? Where did you get it?"

Blake, who speaks with a certain painful effort while he moves slowly away backward from her.—"I found it—I got it from the thief."

Leslie, looking confusedly at him.—"How did you know they had it?"

Maggie.—"Oh, it was you, Mr. Blake, who came flying past us, and drove them

away! Did you have to fight them? Oh, did they hurt you?"

Leslie.—"It was you— Why, how pale you look! There's blood on your face! Why, where were you? How did it all happen? It was you that drove them away? You? And I never thought of you! And I only thought about myself—my watch! I never can forgive myself." She lets fall the watch from her heedless grasp, and he mechanically puts out the hand which he has been keeping behind him; she impetuously seizes it in her own and, suddenly shrinking, he subdues the groan that breaks from him to a sort of gasp, and totters to the log where Leslie has been sitting.

Lilly. — "Oh, see, Miss Bellingham; they've broken his wrist!'

Blake, panting.—"It's nothing; don't—don't"—

Maggie.—"Oh dear, he's going to faint! What *shall* we do if he does? I didn't know they *ever* fainted!" She wrings her hands in despair, while Leslie flings herself upon her knees at Blake's side. "Oughtn't we to support him, somehow? Oh yes, do let's support him, all of us!"

Leslie, imperiously.—"Run down to the

river as fast as ever you can, and wet your handkerchiefs to sprinkle his face with." She passes her arm round Blake's, and tenderly gathers his broken wrist into her right hand. "*One* can support him."

III.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING.

I.

Mrs. Murray *and* Mrs. Bellingham.

Three weeks after the events last represented Mrs. Bellingham and her sister-in-law are once more seated in the hotel parlour, both with sewing, to which the latter abandons herself with an apparently exasperated energy, while the former lets her work lie in her lap, and listens with some lady-like trepidation to what Mrs. Murray is saying.

Mrs. Murray.—"From beginning to end it has been quite like a sensation play. Leslie must feel herself a heroine of melodrama. She is sojourning at a country inn, and she goes sketching in the woods, when two ruffians set upon her and try to rob her. Her screams reach the ear of the young man of humble life but noble heart, who professed to have gone away, but who was still opportunely hanging about; he rushes on the scene and disperses the brigands, from whom

he rends their prey. She seizes his hand to thank him for his sublime behaviour, and discovers that his wrist has been broken by a blow from the bludgeon of one of the wicked ruffians. Very pretty, very charming, indeed; and so appropriate for a girl of Leslie's training, family, and station in life. Upon my word I congratulate you, Marion. To think of being the mother of a heroine! It was fortunate that you let her snub Mr. Dudley. If she had married him, probably nothing of this kind would have happened."

Mrs. Bellingham, uneasily.—"I ought to be glad the affair amuses you, but I don't see how even *you* can hold the child responsible for what has happened."

Mrs. Murray.—"Responsible! I should be the last to do that, I hope. No, indeed. I consider her the victim of circumstances, and since the hero has been thrown back upon our hands, I 'm sure every one must say that her devotion is most exemplary. I don't hold her responsible for that, even." As Mrs. Murray continues, Mrs. Bellingham's uneasiness increases, and she drops her hands with a baffled look upon the work in her lap. "It 's quite *en règle* that she should be anxious about him; it would be altogether

out of character, otherwise. It 's a pity that he doesn't lend himself more gracefully to being petted. When I saw her bringing him a pillow, that first day, after the doctor set his wrist and she had got him to repose his exhausted frame on the sofa, I was almost melted to tears. Of course it can end only in one way."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Kate, I will not have any more of this. It 's intolerable, and you have no right to torment me so. You know that I 'm as much vexed as you can be. It annoys me beyond endurance, but I don't see what, as a lady, I can do about it. Mr. Blake is here again by no fault of his own, certainly, and neither Leslie nor I can treat him with indifference."

Mrs. Murray.—"I don't object to *your* treating him as kindly as you like, but you had better leave as little kindness as possible to Leslie. You must sooner or later recognise one thing, Marion, and take your measures accordingly. I advise you to do it sooner."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"What do you mean?"

Mrs. Murray.—"I mean what you know well enough: that Leslie is interested in this Mr. Blake. I saw that she was, from

the very first moment. He 's just the kind of man to fascinate a girl like Leslie ; you know that. He 's handsome, and he 's shown himself brave ; and all that unconventionality which marks him of a different class gives him a charm to a girl's fancy, even when she has recognised, herself, that he isn't a gentleman. She soon forgets that, and sees merely that he is clever and good. She would very promptly teach a girl of his traditions her place, but a young man is different."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I hope Leslie would treat even a woman with consideration."

Mrs. Murray.—"Oh, consideration, consideration ! You may thank yourself, Marion, and your impossible ideas, if this comes to the worst. You belong to one order of things or you belong to another. If you believe that several generations of wealth, breeding, and station distinguish a girl so that a new man, however good or wise he is, can never be her equal, you must act on your belief, and in a case like this you can't act too promptly."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"What should you do ?"

Mrs. Murray.—"Do ? I should fling away

all absurd ideas of consideration, to begin with. I should deal frankly with Leslie; I should appeal to her pride and her common sense; and I should speak so distinctly to this young man that he couldn't possibly mistake my meaning. I should tell him—I should advise him to try change of air for his wound; or whatever it is."

Mrs. Bellingham, after a moment's dreary reflection.—"That 's quite impossible, Kate. I will speak to Leslie, but I can never offer offence to any one we owe so much."

Mrs. Murray.—"Do you wish *me* to speak to him?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"No, I can't permit that, either.

Mrs. Murray.—"Very well; then you must abide by the result." Mrs. Murray clutches her work together, stooping to recover dropping spools and scissors with an activity surprising in a lady of her massive person, and is about to leave the room, when the sound of steps and voices arrests her; a moment after Miss Bellingham and Blake, with his right arm in a sling, enter the room, so intent upon each other as not to observe the ladies in the corner.

II.

LESLIE *and* BLAKE; MRS. MURRAY *and* MRS. BELLINGHAM *apart.*

Leslie.—"I 'm afraid you 've let me tire you. I 'm such an insatiable walker, and I never thought of your not being perfectly strong, yet."

Blake, laughing.—"Why, Miss Bellingham, it isn't one of my ankles that 's broken."

Leslie, concessively.—"No; but if you 'd only let me *do* something for you. I can both play and sing, and really not at all badly. Shall I play to you?" She goes up and strikes some chords on the piano, and with her hand on the keys glances with mock gravity round at Blake, who remains undecided. She turns about. "Perhaps you 'd rather have me read to you?"

Blake.—"Do you really wish me to choose?"

Leslie.—"I do. And ask something difficult and disagreeable."

Blake.—"I'd rather have you talk to me than either."

Leslie.—"Is that your idea of something difficult and disagreeable?"

Blake.—"I hope you won't find it so."

Leslie.—"But I shan't feel that it's anything, then! Shall I begin to talk to you here? Or where?"

Blake.—"This is a good place, but if I'm to choose again, I should say the gallery would be better."

Leslie.—"Oh, you're choosing that because I said I wondered how people could come into the country and sit all their time in stuffy rooms!"

Blake, going to the window and looking out.—"There are no seats." He returns, and putting the backs of two chairs together, lifts them with his left hand to carry them to the gallery.

Leslie, advancing tragically upon him and reproachfully possessing herself of the chairs.—"Never! Do you think I have *no* sense of shame?" She lifts a chair in either hand and carries them out, while Blake in a charmed embarrassment follows her, and

they are heard speaking without: "There! Or no! That's in a draught. You mustn't sit in a draught."

Blake.—"It won't hurt me. I'm not a young lady."

Leslie.—"That's the very reason it *will* hurt you. If you were a young lady you could stand anything. Anything you *liked*." There are indistinct murmurs of further feigned dispute, broken by more or less conscious laughter, to which Mrs. Bellingham listens with alarm and Mrs. Murray with the self-righteousness of those who have told you so, and who, having thus washed their hands of an affair, propose to give you a shower-bath of the water.

Mrs. Murray.—"Well, Marion?"

Mrs. Bellingham, rising, with a heavy sigh. —"Yes, it's quite as bad as you could wish."

Mrs. Murray.—"As bad as *I* could wish? This is too much, Marion. What are you going to do?" Mrs. Bellingham is gathering up her work as if to quit the room, and Mrs. Murray's demand is pitched in a tone of falling indignation and rising amazement.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"We can't remain to overhear their talk. I am going to my room."

Mrs. Murray.—"Why, Marion, the child is your own daughter!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"That is the very reason why I don't wish to feel that she has cause to be ashamed of me; and I certainly should if I stayed to eavesdrop."

Mrs. Murray.—"How in the world should she ever know it?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I should tell her. But that isn't the point, quite."

Mrs. Murray.—"This is fantastic! Well, let her marry her—Caliban! Why don't you go out and join them? *That* needn't give her cause to blush for you. Remember, Marion, that Leslie is an ignorant inexperienced child, and that it 's your duty to save her from her silliness."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"My daughter is a lady, and will remember herself."

Mrs. Murray.—"But she 's a woman, Marion, and will forget herself!"

Mrs. Bellingham, who hesitates in a brief perplexity, but abruptly finishes her preparations for going out.—"At any rate, I can't dog her steps, nor play the spy upon her. I wish to know only what she will freely tell me."

Mrs. Murray.—"And are you actually

going? Well, Marion, I suppose I mustn't say what I think of you."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"It isn't necessary that you should."

Mrs. Murray.—"If I *were* to speak, I should say that your logic was worthy of Bedlam, and your morality of—of—the millennium!" She whirls furiously out of the parlour, and Mrs. Bellingham, with a lingering glance at the door opening upon the balcony, follows her amply eddying skirts. A moment after their disappearance, Leslie comes to the gallery door and looks exploringly into the parlour.

III.

LESLIE *and* BLAKE; *finally*, MRS. BELLINGHAM.

Leslie, speaking to Blake without.—"I was sure I heard voices. But there's nobody." She turns, and glancing at the hills which show their irregular mass through the open window, sinks down into a chair beside the low gallery rail. "Ah, this is a better point still," and as Blake appears with his chair and plants it *vis-à-vis* with her: "Why *old* Ponkwasset, I wonder? But people always say *old* of mountains: old Wachusett, old Agamenticus, old Monadnock, old Ponkwasset. Perhaps the young mountains have gone West and settled down on the prairies, with all the other young people of the neighbourhood. Wouldn't that explain it?" She looks with openly-feigned seriousness at Blake, who supports in his left hand the

elbow of his hurt arm. "I'm sure it's paining you."

Blake.—"No, no; not the least. The fact is"—he laughs lightly—"I'm afraid I wasn't thinking about the mountains just now, when you spoke."

Leslie.—"Oh, well, neither was I—very much." They both laugh. "But why do you put your hand under your arm, if it doesn't pain you?"

Blake.—"Oh!—I happened to think of the scamp who broke it for me."

Leslie, shuddering.—"Don't speak of it! Or yes, do! Tell me about it; I've *wanted* to ask you. I ought to know about it; I hoped you would tell without asking. I can never be thankful enough that your walk happened to bring you back the same way. Why must you leave me to imagine all the rest?"

Blake.—"Oh, those things are better imagined than described, Miss Bellingham."

Leslie.—"But I want it described. I must hear it, no matter how terrible it is."

Blake.—"It wasn't terrible; there was very little of it, one way or the other. The big fellow wouldn't give up your watch; and I had to—urge him; and the little Irishman

came dancing up, and made a pass at us with his stick, and my wrist caught it. That's all."

Leslie, with effusion.—"*All?* You risked your life to get me back my watch, and I asked about that first, and never mentioned you."

Blake.—"I hadn't done anything worth mentioning."

Leslie.—"Then getting my watch wasn't worth mentioning!"

Blake.—"Where is it? I haven't seen you wear it."

Leslie.—"I broke something in it when I threw it down. It doesn't go. Besides, I thought perhaps you wouldn't like to see it."

Blake.—"Oh, yes, I should."

Leslie, starting up.—"I'll go get it."

Blake.—"Not now!" They are both silent. Leslie falters and then sits down again, and folds one hand over the other on the balcony rail, letting her fan dangle idly by its chain from her waist. He leans forward a little, and taking the fan, opens and shuts it, while she looks down upon him with a slight smile; he relinquishes it with a glance at her, and leans back again in his chair.

Leslie.—"Well, what were you thinking about that hideous little wretch who hurt you?"

Blake.—"Why, I was thinking, for one thing, that he didn't mean to do it."

Leslie.—"Oh! Why *did* he do it, then?"

Blake.—"I believe he meant to hit his partner, though I can't exactly say why. It went through my mind. And I was thinking that a good deal might be said for tramps."

Leslie.—"For tramps that steal watches and break wrists? My philanthropy doesn't rise to those giddy heights, quite. No, decidedly, Mr. Blake, I draw the line at tramps. They never look clean, and why don't they go to work?"

Blake.—"Well, they couldn't find work just now, if they wanted it, and generally I suppose they don't want it. A man who 's been out of work three months is glad to get it, but if he 's idle a year he doesn't want it. When I see one of your big cotton mills standing idle, I know that it means just so much tramping, so much starving and stealing, so much misery and murder. We 're all part of the tangle; we 're all of us to blame, we 're none of us to blame."

Leslie.—"Oh, that 's very well. But if

you pity such wretches, what becomes of the *deserving* poor?"

Blake.—"I'm not sure there are any deserving poor, as you call them, any more than there are deserving rich. So I don't draw the line at tramps. The fact is, Miss Bellingham, I had just been doing those fellows a charity before they attacked you, —given them some tobacco. You don't approve of that?"

Leslie.—"Oh, I like smoking!"

Blake, laughing.—"And I got their idea of a gentleman."

Leslie, after a moment.—"Yes? What was that?"

Blake.—"A man who gives you tobacco, and doesn't ask you why you don't go to work. A *real* gentleman has matches about him to light your pipe with afterwards. Is that your notion of a gentleman?"

Leslie, consciously.—"I don't know; not exactly."

Blake.—"It made me think of the notion of a gentleman I once heard from a very nice fellow years ago: he believed that you couldn't be a gentleman unless you began with your grandfather. I was younger then, and I remember shivering over it, for it left

me quite out in the cold, though I couldn't help liking the man; he was a gentleman in spite of what he said,—a splendid fellow, if you made allowance for him. You have to make allowances for everybody, especially for men who have had all the advantages. It's apt to put them wrong for life; they get to thinking that the start is the race. I used to look down on that sort of men, once—in theory. But what I saw of them in the war taught me better; they only wanted an emergency, and they could show themselves as good as anybody. It isn't safe to judge people by their circumstances; besides, I've known too many men who had all the *dis*advantage and never came to anything. Still I prefer the tramp's idea—perhaps because it's more flattering—that you are a gentleman if you choose to be so. What do you think?"

Leslie.—"I don't know." After an interval long enough to vanquish and banish a disagreeable consciousness: "I think it's a very unpleasant subject. Why don't you talk of something else?"

Blake.—"Oh, I wasn't to talk at all, as I understood. I was to be talked to."

Leslie.—"Well, what shall I talk to you about? You must choose that, too."

Blake.—"Let us talk about yourself, then."

Leslie.—"There *is* nothing about me. I'm just like every other girl. Get Miss Wallace to tell you about herself, some day, and then you'll know my whole history. I've done everything that she's done. We had the same dancing, singing, piano, French, German, and Italian lessons; we went to the same schools and the same lectures; we have both been abroad, and can sketch, and paint on tiles. We're as nearly alike as the same experiences and associations could make us, and we're just like all the other girls we know. Isn't it rather monotonous?"

Blake.—"I don't know all the other girls that you know. If I can judge from Miss Wallace, I don't believe you're like them; but they may be like you."

Leslie, laughing.—"That's too fine a distinction for me. And you haven't answered my question."

Blake, gravely.—"No, it isn't monotonous to me; it's all very good, I think. I'm rather old-fashioned about women; I like everything in their lives to be regular and ordered by old usage."

Leslie.—"Then you don't approve of originality?"

Blake.—"I don't like eccentricity."

Leslie.—"Oh, I do. I should like to do all sorts of odd things, if I dared."

Blake.—"Well, your not daring is a great point. If I had a sister, I should want her to be like all the other girls that are like you."

Leslie.—"You compliment! She couldn't be like me."

Blake.—"Why?"

Leslie.—"Why? Oh, I don't know." She hesitates, and then with a quick glance at him: "She would have dark eyes and hair, for one thing." They both laugh.

Blake.—"Was that what you meant to say?"

Leslie.—"Isn't it enough to say what you mean, without being obliged to say what you meant?"

Blake.—"Half a loaf is better than no bread; beggars mustn't be choosers."

Leslie.—"Oh, if you put it so meekly as that, you humiliate me. I must tell you now: I meant a question."

Blake.—"What is it?"

Leslie.—"But I can't ask it yet. Not till I've got rid of some part of my obligations."

Blake.—"I suppose you mean what I—what happened."

Leslie.—"Yes."

Blake.—"I'm sorry that it happened, then; and I had been feeling rather glad of it on the whole. I shall hate it if it's an annoyance to you."

Leslie.—"Oh,—not annoyance, exactly."

Blake.—"What then? Should you like a receipt in full for all gratitude due me?"

Leslie.—"I should like to feel that we had done something for you in return."

Blake.—"You can cancel it all by giving me leave to enjoy being just what and where I am."

Leslie, demurely, after a little pause.—"Is a broken wrist such a pleasure, then?"

Blake.—"I take the broken wrist for what it brings. If it were not for that, I should be in New York breaking my heart over some people I'm connected with in business there, and wondering how to push a little invention of mine without their help. Instead of that"—

Leslie, hastily.—"Oh! Invention? Are you an inventor, too, Mr. Blake? Do tell me what it is."

Blake.—"It's an improved locomotive

driving-wheel. But you 'd better let me alone about that, Miss Bellingham ; I never stop when I get on my driving-wheel. That 's what makes my friends doubtful about it ; they don't see how any brake can check it. They say the Westinghouse air-brake would exhaust the atmosphere of the planet on it without the slightest effect. You see I *am* rather sanguine about it." He laughs nervously.

Leslie.—"But what have those New York people to do with it ?"

Blake.—"Nothing at present. That 's the worst of it. They were partners of mine, and they got me to come on all the way from Omaha, and then I found out that they had no means to get the thing going."

Leslie.—"Oh ! How could they do it ?"

Blake.—"Well, I used language to that effect myself, but they didn't seem to know ; and I ran up here to cool off and think the matter over for a fresh start. You see, if I succeed it will be an everlasting fortune to me ; and if I fail,—well, it will be an everlasting *mis*fortune. But I 'm not going to fail. There ; I 'm started ! If I went on a moment longer, no power on earth could stop me. I suppose you 're not much used to

talking about driving-wheels, Miss Bellingham?"

Leslie.—"We don't *often* speak of them. But they must be very interesting to those that understand them."

Blake.—"I can't honestly say they are. They 're like railroads; they 're good to get you there."

Leslie.—"Where?"

Blake.—"Well, in my case, away from a good deal of drudgery I don't like, and a life I don't altogether fancy, and a kind of world I know too well. I should go to Europe, I suppose, if the wheel succeeded. I've a curiosity to see what the apple is like on the other side; whether it 's riper or only rottener. And I always believed I should quiet down somewhere, and read all the books I wanted to, and make up for lost time in several ways. I don't think I should look at any sort of machine for a year."

Leslie, earnestly.—"And would all that happen if you had the money to get the driving-wheel going?"

Blake, with a smile at her earnestness.—"I 'm not such a driving-wheel fanatic as that. The thing has to be fully tested, and

even after it 's tested, the roads may refuse to take hold of it."

Leslie, confidently.—"They can't—when they see that it 's better."

Blake.—"I wish I could think so. But roads are human, Miss Bellingham. They prefer a thing that 's just as well to something that 's much better—if it costs much to change."

Leslie.—"Well, then, if you don't believe the roads will take hold of it, why do you want to test it? Why don't you give it up at once?"

Blake.—"It won't give me up. I do believe in it, you know, and I can't stop where I am with it, I must go on."

Leslie.—"Yes. I should do just the same. I should never, *never* give it up. I know you 'll be helped. Mr. Blake, if this wheel"—

Blake.—"Really, Miss Bellingham, I feel ashamed for letting you bother yourself so long with that ridiculous wheel. But you wouldn't stick to the subject: we were talking about you."

Leslie, dreamily.—"About me?" Then abruptly: "Mamma will wonder what in the world has become of me." She rises,

and Blake, with an air of slight surprise, follows her example. She leads the way into the parlour, and lingeringly drawing near the piano, she strikes some chords, and as she stands over the instrument, she carelessly plays an air with one hand. Then, without looking up: "Was that the air you were trying to remember?"

Blake, joyfully.—"Oh yes, that's it; that's it, at last!"

Leslie, seating herself at the piano and running over the keys again.—"I think I can play it for you; it's rather old-fashioned now." She plays and sings, and then rests with her hands on the keys, looking up at Blake where he stands leaning one elbow on the corner of the piano.

Blake.—"I'm very much obliged."

Leslie, laughing.—"And I'm very much surprised."

Blake.—"Why?"

Leslie.—"I should think the inventor of a driving-wheel would want something a great deal more stirring than this German sentimentality and those languid, melancholy things from Tennyson that you liked."

Blake.—"Ah, that's just what I don't want. I've got stir enough of my own."

Leslie.—"I wish I could understand you."

Blake.—"Am I such a puzzle? I always thought myself a very simple affair."

Leslie.—"That's the difficulty. I wish"—

Blake.—"What?"

Leslie.—"That I could say something wrong in just the right way!"

Blake, laughing.—"How do you know it's wrong?"

Leslie.—"It isn't, if you don't think so."

Blake.—"I don't, so far."

Leslie.—"Ah, don't joke. It's a very serious matter."

Blake.—"Why should I think it was wrong?"

Leslie.—"I don't know that you will. Mr. Blake"—

Blake.—"Well?"

Leslie.—"Did you know— If I begin to say something, and feel like stopping before I've said it, you won't ask questions to make me go on?" Very seriously.

Blake, with a smile of joyous amusement, looking down at her as he lounges at the corner of the piano.—"I won't even ask you to begin." Leslie passes her hand over the edges of the keys, without making them sound; then she drops it into her lap and

there clasps it with the other hand, and looks up at Blake.

Leslie.—"Did you know I was rich, Mr. Blake?"

Blake.—"No, Miss Bellingham, I didn't." His smile changes from amusement to surprise, and he colours faintly.

Leslie, blushing violently.—"Well, I am,—if being rich is having a great deal more money to do what you please than you know what to do with." Blake listens with a look of deepening mystification; she hurries desperately on: "I have this money in my own right; it's what my uncle left me, and I can give it all away if I choose." She pauses again, as if waiting for Blake to ask her to go on, but he remains loyally silent; his smile has died away, and an embarrassment increases upon both of them. She looks up at him again, and implores: "What *will* you think of what I'm going to say?"

Blake, breaking into a troubled laugh.—"I can't imagine what you're going to say."

Leslie.—"Don't laugh! I know you won't—Oh, Mr. Blake, you said you liked girls to be just like everybody else, and old-established, and that; and I know this is as

eccentric as it can be. It isn't at all the thing, I know, for a young lady to say to a gentleman; but you 're not like the others, and— Oh, it doesn't seem possible that I should have begun it! it seems perfectly monstrous! But I know you won't misinterpret; I must, I must go on, and the bluntest and straightforwardest way will be the best way." She keeps wistfully scanning Blake's face as she speaks, but apparently gathers no courage or comfort from it. "Mr. Blake!"

Blake, passively.—"Well?"

Leslie, with desperate vehemence.—"I want—Oh, what will you think of me! But no, you 're too good yourself not to see it in just the right way. I 'm sure that you won't think it—unladylike—for me to propose such a thing, merely because—because most people wouldn't do it; but I shall respect your reasons—I shall know you 're right—even if you refuse me; and— Oh, Mr. Blake, I want to go into partnership with you!"

Blake, recoiling a pace or two from the corner of the piano, as Leslie rises from the stool and stands confronting him: "To—to —go into"—

Leslie.—"Yes, yes! But how dreadfully you take it; and you promised— Oh, I *knew* you wouldn't like it! I know it seems dreadfully queer, and not at all delicate. But I thought—I thought—from what you said— You said those people had no money to push your invention, and here I have all this money doing nobody any good—and you 've done nothing but heap one kindness after another on us—and why *shouldn't* you take it, as much as you want, and use it to perfect your driving-wheel? I 'm sure I believe in it; and"— She has followed him the pace or two of his withdrawal; but now, at some changing expression of his face, she hesitates, falters, and remains silent and motionless, as if fixed and stricken mute by the sight of some hideous apparition. Then with a wild incredulity: "Oh!" and indignation, "Oh!" and passionate reproach and disappointment, "Oh! How cruel, how shameless, how horrid!" She drops her face into her hands, and sinks upon the piano-stool, throwing her burdened arms upon the keys with a melodious crash.

Blake.—"Don't, don't! For pity's sake, don't, my—Miss Bellingham!" He stands over her in helpless misery and abject self-

reproach. "Good heavens, I didn't— It was all"—

Leslie, springing erect.—"Don't speak to me. Your presence, your being alive in the same world after that is an insufferable insult! For you to dare! Ah! No woman could say what you thought. No lady"—

Blake.—"Wait!" He turns pale, and speaks low and steadily: "You must listen to me now; you must hear what I never dreamt I should dare to say. I loved you! If that had not bewildered me, I could not have thought—what was impossible. It was a delusion dearer than life; but I was ashamed of the hope it gave me even while it lasted. Don't mistake *me*, Miss Bellingham; I could have died to win your love, but if your words had said what they seemed to say, I would not have taken what they seemed to offer. But that 's past. And now that I have to answer your meaning, I must do it without thanks. You place me in the position of having told my story to hint for your help"—

Leslie, in vehement protest.—"Oh, no, no, no! I never dreamt of such a thing! I couldn't!"

Blake.—"Thank you at least for that;

and—Good-bye!" He bows and moves away toward the door.

Leslie, wildly.—"Oh, don't go, don't go! What have I done, what shall I do?"

Blake, pausing, and then going abruptly back to her.—"You can forgive me, Miss Bellingham; and let everything be as it was."

Leslie, after a moment of silent anguish.—"No, no. That 's impossible. It can never be the same again. It must all end. I can forgive you easily enough; it was nothing; the wrong was all mine. I 've been cruelly to blame, letting you—go on. Oh yes, very, very much. But I didn't know it; and I didn't mean anything by anything. No, I couldn't. Good-bye. You are right to go. You mustn't see me any more. I shall never forget your goodness and patience." Eagerly: "You wouldn't want me to forget it, would you?"

Blake, brokenly.—"Whatever you do will be right. God bless you, and good-bye." He takes up her right hand in his left, and raises it to his lips, she trembling, and as he stands holding it Mrs. Bellingham enters with an open letter.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Leslie"—

Leslie, who withdraws her hand, and after a momentary suspense turns unashamed to her mother. — "Mr. Blake is going away, mamma"— Mrs. Bellingham faintly acknowledges his parting bow. Leslie watches him go, and then turns away with a suppressed sob.

IV.

MRS. MURRAY'S TRIUMPH.

140934

I.

MRS. BELLINGHAM *and* LESLIE.

Leslie.—"Well, mamma, what will you say to me now?" Without the inspiration of Blake's presence, she stands drearily confronting her mother in Mrs. Bellingham's own room, where the latter, seated in her easy-chair, looks up into Leslie's face.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Nothing, Leslie. I am waiting for you to speak."

Leslie.—"Oh, I can't speak unless you ask me." She drops into a chair, and hiding her face in her handkerchief weeps silently. Her mother waits till her passion is spent and she has wiped her tears, and sits mutely staring toward the window.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Is he coming back again, Leslie?"

Leslie.—"No."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Was it necessary

that you should let him take leave of you in that way?"

Leslie, sighing.—"No, it wasn't necessary. But—it was inevitable."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"What had made it inevitable? Remember, Leslie, that you asked me to question you."

Leslie.—"I know it, mamma."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"And you needn't answer if you don't like."

Leslie.—"I don't like, but I will answer, all the same, for you have a right to know. I had been saying something silly to him."

Mrs. Bellingham, with patient hopelessness.—"Yes?"

Leslie.—"It seems so, now; but I know that I spoke from a right motive,—a motive that you wouldn't disapprove of yourself, mamma."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I'm sure of that, my dear."

Leslie.—"Well, you see— Couldn't you go on and ask me, mamma?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I don't know what to ask, Leslie."

Leslie.—"It's so hard to tell, without!" Desperately: "Why, you see, mamma, Mr. Blake had told me about a thing he had been

inventing, and how some people in New York had promised him money to get it along,—push it, he said,—and when he came on all the way from Omaha, he found that they had no money; and so—and so—I—I offered him some."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Oh, Leslie!"

Leslie.—"Yes, yes, it seems horrid, now,—perfectly hideous. But I did so long to do something for him because he had done so much for us, and I think he is so modest and noble, and I felt so sorry that he should have been so cruelly deceived. Wasn't that a good motive, mamma?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Oh, yes, my poor headlong child! But what a thing for a young lady to propose! I can't imagine how you could approach the matter."

Leslie.—"That's the worst of it,—the very worst. Of course, I never *could* have approached such a thing with any other young man; but I thought there was such a difference between us, don't you know, in everything, that it would be safe; and I thought it would be better—he would like it better—if there was no beating about the bush; and so I said—I said—that I wanted to go into partnership with him."

Mrs. Bellingham, with great trouble in her voice, but steadily. — "What answer did he make you, Leslie?"

Leslie.—"Oh, I was justly punished for looking down upon him. At first he blushed in a strange sort of way, and then he turned pale and looked grieved and angry, and at last repeated my words in a kind of daze, and I blundered on, and all at once—I saw what he thought I had meant; he thought — Oh dear, dear,—he thought"—she hides her face again, and sobs out the words behind her handkerchief—"that I w-w-anted to — to — to marry him! Oh, how shall I ever endure it? It was a thousand times worse than the tramps,—a thousand times." Mrs. Bellingham remains silently regarding her daughter, who continues to bemoan herself, and then lifts her tear-stained face: "Don't you think it was ungratefully, horridly, cruelly vulgar?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Mr. Blake can't have the refinement of feeling that you've been used to in the gentlemen of your acquaintance; I'm glad that you've found that out for yourself, though you've had to reach it through such a bitter mortification. If such a man misunderstood you"—

Leslie, indignantly.—"Mr. Blake is quite as good as the gentlemen of my acquaintance, mamma; he couldn't help thinking what he did, I blundered so, and when I flew out at him, and upbraided him for his—ungenerosity, and hurt his feelings all I could, he excused himself in a perfectly satisfactory way. He said"—

Mrs. Bellingham.—"What, Leslie?"

Leslie, with a drooping head.—"He said—he used words more refined and considerate than I ever dreamt of—he said he was always thinking of me in that way without knowing it, and hoping against hope, or he could never have misunderstood me in the world. And then he let me know that he wouldn't have taken me, no matter how much he liked me, if what he thought for only an instant had been true; and he could never have taken my money, for that would have made him seem like begging, by what he had told me. And he talked splendidly, mamma, and he put me down, as I deserved, and he was going away, and I called him back, and we agreed that we must never see each other again; and—and I couldn't help his kissing my hand." She puts up her handkerchief and sobs, and there is an in-

terval before her mother speaks in a tone of compassion, yet of relief.

Mrs. Bellingham. — "Well, Leslie, I'm glad that you could agree upon so wise a course. This has all been a terribly perplexing and painful affair; and I have had my fears, my dear, that perhaps it had gone so far with you that" —

Leslie, vehemently.—"Why, so it had! I didn't know I liked him so, but I do; and I give him up—I gave him up—because you all hate him, yes, *all;* and you shut your eyes, and *won't* see how kind and brave and good he is; and I can't hold out against you. Yes, he must go; but he takes my broken heart with him."

Mrs. Bellingham, sternly.—"Leslie, this is absurd. You know yourself that he's out of the question."

Leslie, flinging herself down and laying her head in her mother's lap with a desolate cry,—"O mamma, mamma, don't speak so harshly to me, or I shall die. I *know* he's out of the question; yes, yes, I do. But how? How, mamma? How is he out of the question? That's what I can't understand!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Why, to begin with, we know nothing about him, Leslie."

Leslie, eagerly.—"Oh yes, I do. He 's told me all about himself. He 's an inventor. He 's a genius. Yes, he knows everything, indeed he does; and in the war he was an engineer. If you could only hear him talk as I do" —

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I dare say. But even a civil engineer" —

Leslie.—"A *civil* engineer! I should hope *not*. I should be ashamed of a man who had been a civilian during the war. He always had this great taste for mechanics, and he studied the business of a machinist—I don't know what it is, exactly; but he knows all about steam, and he can build a whole engine, himself; and he happened to be a private soldier going somewhere on a Mississippi gunboat when the engineer was killed, and he took charge of the engine at once, and was in the great battles with the boat afterwards. He 's a military engineer."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"He 's a *steamboat* engineer, Leslie."

Leslie.—"He was an officer of the boat—an officer" —

Mrs. Bellingham, with a groan.—"Oh, he wasn't an officer of the sort you think; he

had no military rank ; he had the place of a clever artisan."

Leslie.—"I don't understand."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"He looked after the machinery, and saw that the boiler didn't burst,—I don't know what. But you might as well marry a locomotive-driver, as far as profession goes."

Leslie, aghast.—"Do you mean that when Mr. Blake was an engineer, he didn't wear any coat, and had his sleeves rolled up, and went about with a stringy wad of oily cotton in his hand ?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes."

Leslie.—"Oh !" She excludes the horrible vision by clasping both hands over her eyes.

Mrs. Bellingham, very gravely.—"Now listen to me, Leslie. You know that I am not like your aunt Kate,—that I never talk in that vulgar way about classes and stations, don't you ?"

Leslie, still in a helpless daze.—"Oh, yes, mamma. I 've always been a great deal worse than you, myself."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Well, my dear, then I hope that you will acquit me of anything low or snobbish in what I have to say. There is a fitness in all things, and I speak out of

respect to that. It is simply impossible that a girl of your breeding and ideas and associations should marry a man of his. Recollect that no one belongs entirely to themselves. You are part of the circle in which you have always moved, and he is part of the circumstances of his life. Do you see?"

Leslie.—"Yes." She lapses from a kneeling to a crouching posture, and resting one elbow on her mother's knee poises her chin on her hand, and listens drearily.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"We may say that it is no matter what a man has been; that we are only concerned with what Mr. Blake is now. But the trouble is that every one of us is what they have been. If Mr. Blake's early associations have been rude and his business coarse, you may be sure they have left their mark upon him, no matter how good he may be naturally. I think he is of a very high and sweet nature; he seems so"—

Leslie.—"Oh, he is, he is!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"But he can't outlive his own life. *Isn't that reasonable?*"

Leslie, hopelessly.—"Yes, it seems so."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"You can't safely marry any man whose history you despise.

Marriage is a terrible thing, my dear; young girls can never understand how it searches out the heart, and tries and tests in every way. You mustn't have a husband whom you can imagine with a wad of greasy cotton in his hand. There will be wicked moments in which you will taunt and torment each other."

Leslie.—"O mamma, mamma!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes, it is so! The truest love can come to that. And in those moments it is better that all your past and present should be of the same level as his; for you wouldn't hesitate to throw any scorn in his teeth; you would be mad, and you must not have deadly weapons within reach. I speak very plainly."

Leslie.—"Terribly!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"But that is the worst. There are a thousand lighter trials, which you must meet. Where would you live, if you married him? You have a fortune, and you might go to Europe"—

Leslie.—"I *never* would sneak away to Europe with him!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I should hope not. But if you remained at home, how would you introduce him to your friends? Inven-

tion isn't a profession; would you tell them that he was a machinist or a steamboat engineer by trade? And if they found it out without your telling?"

Leslie, evasively.—"There are plenty of girls who marry men of genius, and it doesn't matter what the men have done,—how humble they have been. If they're geniuses"—

Mrs. Bellingham.—"O Leslie, such men have won all the honours and distinctions before they marry. Girls like you, my dear, don't marry geniuses in their poverty and obscurity. Those men spend years and years of toil and study, and struggle through a thousand difficulties and privations, and set the world talking about them, before they can even be asked to meet the ordinary people of our set in society. Wait till Mr. Blake has shown"—

Leslie.—"But he'd be an old man by that time, and then I shouldn't want him. If I know *now* that he's going to be great"—

Mrs. Bellingham.—"My dear, you know nothing whatever about him, except that his past life has been shabby and common."

Leslie, with sudden spirit.—"Well, then, mamma, at least I don't know anything

horrid of him, as some girls must know of the young men they marry,—and the old men, too. Just think of Violet Emmons's match with that count, there in Paris! And Aggy Lawson's with that dreadful old Mr. Lancaster, that everybody says has been so wicked! I 'd rather marry Mr. Blake, a thousand times, if he had been a—I don't know what!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"You have no right to take things at their worst, Leslie. Remember all the girls you know, and the accomplished men they have married in their own set; men who are quite their equals in goodness as well as station and wealth and breeding. That 's what I want you to do."

Leslie.—"Do you wish me to marry somebody I don't like?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Be fair, Leslie. I merely wish you to like somebody you ought to marry,—when the proper time comes. How do you know that Mr. Blake isn't quite as bad as the count or Mr. Lancaster?"

Leslie, with a burst of tears.—"Oh, mamma, you just now said yourself that you believed he was good and sweet, and you have seen the beautiful delicacy he behaves towards women with. Well, well,"—

she rises, and catches in her hand a long coil of her hair which has come loose from the mass, and stands holding it while she turns tragically toward her mother,—"let it all go. I will never marry at all, and then at least I can't displease you. I give him up, and I hope it will make you happy, mamma."

Mrs. Bellingham, rising.—"Leslie, is this the way you reward my anxiety and patience? I have reasoned with you as a woman of sense, and the return you make is to behave as a petulant child. I will never try to control you in such a matter as this, but you know now what I think, and you can have your own way if you like it better or believe it is wiser than mine. Oh, my poor child!" —clasping Leslie's head between her hands and tenderly kissing the girl's hair,—"don't you suppose your mother's heart aches for you? Marry him if you will, Leslie, and I shall always love you. I hope I may never have to pity you more than I do now. All that I ask of you, after all, is to make sure of yourself."

Leslie.—"I will, mamma, I will. He must go; oh, yes, he must go! I see that it wouldn't do. It would be too unequal,—I'm so far beneath him in everything but

the things I ought to despise. No, I 'm not his equal, and I never can be, and so I must not think of him any more. If *he* were rich, and had been brought up like me, and I were some poor girl with nothing but her love for him, he would never let the world outweigh her love, as I do his. Don't praise me, mother; don't thank me. It isn't for you I do it; it isn't for anything worthy, or true, or good; it 's because I 'm a coward, and afraid of the opinions of people I despise. You 've shown me what I am. I thought I was brave and strong; but I am weak and timid, and I shall never respect myself any more. Send him away; tell him what an abject creature I am! It will kill me to have him think meanly of me, but oh, it will be a thousand times better that he should have a right to scorn me now, than that I should ever come to despise myself for having been ashamed of him, when—when— That I *couldn't* bear!" She drops into a chair near the table and lets fall her face into her hands upon it, sobbing.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Leslie, Leslie! Be yourself! How strangely you act!"

Leslie, lifting her face, to let it gleam a moment upon her mother before she drops

it.—"Oh, yes, I *feel* very strangely. But now I won't distress you any more, mother," lifting her face again and impetuously drying her eyes with her handkerchief; "I will be firm, now, and no one shall ever hear a murmur from me,—not a murmur. I think that 's due to you, mamma; you have been so patient with me. I 've no right to grieve you by going on in this silly way, and I won't. I will be firm, firm, firm!" She casts herself into her mother's arms, and as she hangs upon her neck in a passion of grief, Mrs. Murray appears in the door-way, and in spite of Mrs. Bellingham's gesticulated entreaties to retire, advances into the room.

II.

MRS. MURRAY, MRS. BELLINGHAM, *and* LESLIE.

Mrs. Murray.—"Why, what in the world does all this mean?"

Leslie, raising her head and turning fiercely upon her.—"It means that I 'm now all you wish me to be,—quite your own ideal of ingratitude and selfishness, and I wish you joy of your success!" She vanishes stormily from the room and leaves Mrs. Murray planted.

Mrs. Murray.—"Has she dismissed him? Has she broken with him?"

Mrs. Bellingham, coldly.—"I think she meant you to understand that."

Mrs. Murray.—"Very well, then, Charles can't come a moment too soon. If things are at this pass, and Leslie 's in this mood, it 's the most dangerous moment of the whole

affair. If she should meet him now, everything would be lost."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Don't be troubled. She won't meet him; he 's gone.'

Mrs. Murray.—"I shall believe that when I see him going. A man like that would never leave her, in the world, because she bade him,—and I should think him a great fool if he did."

V.

BLAKE'S SAVING DOUBT.

I.

LESLIE *and* MAGGIE.

Leslie.—"But it 's all over,—it 's all over. I shall live it down; but it will make another girl of me, Maggie." Along the road that winds near the nook where the encounter with the tramps took place, Leslie comes languidly pacing with her friend Maggie Wallace, who listens, as they walk, with downcast eyes and an air of reverent devotion, to Leslie's talk. Her voice trembles a little, and as they pause a moment Maggie draws Leslie's head down upon her neck, from which the latter presently lifts it fiercely. "I don't *wish* you to pity me, Maggie, for I don't deserve any pity. I 'm not suffering an atom more than I ought. It 's all my own fault. Mamma really left me quite free, and if I cared more for what people would say and think and *look* than I did for him, I 'm rightfully

punished, and I'm not going to whimper about it. I've thought it all out."

Maggie.—"O Leslie, you always *did* think things out so clearly!"

Leslie.—"And I hope that I shall get my reward, and be an example. I hope I shall never marry at all, or else some horrid old thing I detest; it would serve me right and I should be glad of it!"

Maggie.—"Oh no, no! Don't talk in that way, Leslie. Do come back with me to the house and lie down, or I'm sure you'll be ill. You look perfectly worn out."

Leslie, drooping upon the fallen log where she had sat to sketch the birch forest.—"Yes, I'm tired. I think I shall never be rested again. It's the same place,"—looking wistfully round,—"and yet how strange it seems. You know we used to come here, and sit on this log and talk. What long, long talks! Oh me, it will never be again! How weird those birches look! Like ghosts. I wish I was one of them. Well, well! It's all over. Don't wait here, Maggie, dear. Go back to the house; I will come soon; you mustn't let me keep you from Miss Roberts. Excuse me to her, and tell her I'll go some other time. I can't now. Go, Maggie!"

Maggie.—"O Leslie; I hate to leave you here! After what's happened, it seems such a dreadful place."

Leslie.—"After what's happened, it's a sacred place,—the dearest place in the world to me. Come, Maggie, you mustn't break your appointment. It was very good of you to come with me at all, and now you must go. Say that you left me behind a little way; that I'll be there directly."

Maggie.—"Leslie!"

Leslie.—"Maggie!" They embrace tenderly, and Maggie, looking back more than once, goes on her way, while Leslie sits staring absently at the birches. She remains in this dreary reverie till she is startled by a footfall in the road, when she rises in a sudden panic. Blake listlessly advances toward her; at the sight of her he halts, and they both stand silently regarding each other.

II.

LESLIE *and* BLAKE.

Leslie.—"Oh! You said you were going away."

Blake.—"Are you in such haste to have me gone? I had to wait for the afternoon stage; I couldn't walk. I thought I might keep faith with you by staying away from the house till it was time to start."

Leslie, precipitately.—"Do you call that keeping faith with me? Is leaving me all alone keeping— Oh, yes, yes, it is! You have done right. It's I who can't keep faith with myself. Why did you come here? You knew I would be here! I didn't think you could be guilty of such duplicity."

Blake.—"I had no idea of finding you here, but if I had known you were here perhaps I couldn't have kept away. The future doesn't look very bright to me, Miss Bellingham. I had a crazy notion that perhaps I

might somehow find something of the past here that I could make my own. I wanted to come and stand here, and think once more that it all really happened—that here I saw the pity in your face that made me so glad of my hurt."

Leslie.—"No; stop! It wasn't pity! It was nothing good or generous. It was mean regret that I should be under such an obligation to you; it was a selfish and despicable fear that you would have a claim upon my acquaintance which I must recognise." Blake makes a gesture of protest and disbelief, and seems about to speak, but she hurries on: "You mustn't go away with one good thought of me. Since we parted, three hours ago, I have learned to know myself as I never did before, and now I see what a contemptible thing I am. I flattered myself that I had begged you to go away because I didn't like to cross the wishes of my family, but it wasn't that. It was—oh, listen! and try if you can imagine such vileness: I 'm so much afraid of the world I 've always lived in, that no matter how good and brave and wise and noble you were, still if any one should laugh or sneer at you because you had been—what you have been—I should be ashamed of you.

There! I'm so low and feeble a creature as that; and that's the real reason why you must go and forget me; and I must not think and you must not think it's from any good motive I send you away."

Blake.—"I don't believe it!"

Leslie.—"What!"

Blake.—"I don't believe what you say. Nothing shall rob me of my faith in you. Do you think that I'm not man enough to give up what I've no right to because it's the treasure of the world? Do you think I can't go till you make me believe that what I'd have sold my life for isn't worth a straw? No! I'll give up my hope, I'll give up my love,—poor fool I was to let it live an instant! —but my faith in you is something dearer yet, and I'll keep that till I die. Say what you will, you are still first among women to me: the most beautiful, the noblest, the best!"

Leslie, gasping, and arresting him in a movement to turn away.—"Wait, wait; don't go! Speak; say it again! Say that you don't believe it; that it isn't true!"

Blake.—"No, I don't believe it. No, it isn't true. It's abominably false!"

Leslie, bursting into tears.—"Oh yes, it

is. It 's abominable, and it 's false. Yes, I *will* believe in myself again. I *know* that if I had cared for—any one, as—as you cared, as you said you cared for me, I could be as true to them as you would be through any fate. Oh, thank you, thank you !" At the tearful joy of the look she turns on him he starts toward her. "Oh !"—she shrinks away—"you mustn't think that I"—

Blake.—"I don't think anything that doesn't worship you !"

Leslie.—"Yes, but what I said sounds just like the other, when you misunderstood me so heartlessly."

Blake.—"I don't misunderstand you now. You *do* tell me that you love me, don't you ? How should I dare hope without your leave ?"

Leslie.—"You said you wouldn't have taken me as a *gift* if I had. You said you 'd have hated me. You said "—

Blake.—"I was all wrong in what I thought. I 'm ashamed to think of that ; but I was right in what I said."

Leslie.—"Oh, *were* you ! If you could misunderstand me then, how do you know that you 're not misunderstanding me now ?"

Blake.—"Perhaps I am. Perhaps I 'm

dreaming as wildly as I was then. But you shall say. Am I?"

Leslie, demurely.—"I don't know; I"—staying his instantaneous further approach with extended arm—"No, no!" She glances fearfully round: "Wait; come with me. Come back with me—that is, if you will."

Blake, passionately.—"If I will!"

Leslie, with pensive archness.—"I want you to help me clear up my character."

Blake, gravely.—"Leslie, may I"—

Leslie.—"I can't talk with you here."

Blake, sadly.—"I will not go back with you to make sorrow for you and trouble among your friends. It 's enough to know that you don't forbid me to love you."

Leslie.—"Oh no, it isn't enough—for everybody."

Blake.—"Leslie"—

Leslie.—"Miss Bellingham, please!"

Blake.—"Miss Bellingham"—

Leslie.—"Well?"

Blake, after a stare of rapturous perplexity.—"Nothing!"

Leslie, laughing through her tears.—"If you don't make haste, you will be too late for the stage, and then you can't get away till to-morrow."

VI.

MR. CHARLES BELLINGHAM'S DIPLOMACY

I.

Mrs. Bellingham, Mrs. Murray, *and* Mr. Charles Bellingham.

In the parlour with Mrs. Bellingham and Mrs. Murray sits a gentleman no longer young, but in the bloom of a comfortable middle life, with blonde hair tending to baldness, accurately parted in the middle, and with a handsome face, lazily shrewd, supported by a comely substructure of double chin, and traversed by a full blonde moustache. He is simply, almost carelessly, yet elegantly dressed in a thin summer stuff, and he has an effect of recent arrival. His manner has distinction, enhanced and refined by the eye-glasses which his near-sightedness obliges him to wear. He sits somewhat ponderously in the chair in which he has planted a person just losing its earlier squareness in the lines of beauty; his feet are set rather wide apart in the fashion of gentlemen

approaching a certain weight; and he has an air of amiable resolution as of a man who having dined well yesterday means to dine well to-day.

Charles Bellingham, smiling amusement and indolently getting the range of his aunt through his glasses.—"So I have come a day after the fair."

Mrs. Murray.—"That is your mother's opinion."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes, Charles, Leslie had known what to do herself, and had done it, even before I spoke to her. I 'm sorry we made you drag all the way up here for nothing."

Bellingham.—"Oh, I don't mind it, mother. Duty called, and I obeyed. My leisure can wait for my return. The only thing is that they 've got a new fellow at the club now, who interprets one's ideas of planked Spanish mackerel with a sentiment that amounts to genius. I suppose you plank horn-pout, here. But as to coming for nothing, I 'd much rather do that than come for something, in a case like this. You say Leslie saw herself that it wouldn't do?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes, she had really behaved admirably, Charles; and when I

set the whole matter before her, she fully agreed with me."

Bellingham.—"But you think she rather liked him?"

Mrs. Bellingham, sighing a little.—"Yes, there is no doubt of that."

Bellingham musingly.—"Well, it 's a pity. Behaved rather well in that tramp business, you said?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Nobly."

Bellingham.—"And hasn't pushed himself, at all?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Not an instant."

Bellingham.—"Well, I 'm sorry for him, poor fellow, but I 'm glad the thing 's over. It would have been an awkward affair, under all the circumstances, to take hold of. I say, mother,"—with a significant glance at Mrs. Murray,—"there hasn't been anything—ah—abrupt in the management of this matter? You ladies sometimes forget the limitations of action in your amiable eagerness to have things over, you know."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I think your mother would not forget herself in such a case."

Bellingham.—"Of course, of course; excuse my asking, mother. But you 're about the only woman that wouldn't."

Mrs. Murray, bitterly.—"Oh, your mother and Leslie have *both* used him with the greatest tenderness."

Bellingham, drily.—"I 'm glad to hear it; I never doubted it. If the man had been treated by any of my family with the faintest slight after what had happened, I should have felt bound as a gentleman to offer him any reparation in my power,—to make him any apology. People of our sort can't do anything shabby." Mrs. Murray does not reply, but rises from her place on the sofa and goes to the window. "Does Leslie know I 'm here?"

Mrs. Bellingham, with a little start.—"Really, I forgot to tell her you were coming to-day; we had been keeping it from her, and"—

Bellingham.—"I don't know that it matters. Where is she?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I saw her going out with Maggie Wallace. I daresay she will be back soon."

Bellingham.—"All right. Where is the young man? Has he gone yet?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"No, he couldn't go till the afternoon stage leaves. He 's still here."

Bellingham.—"I must look him up, and

make my acknowledgments to him." He rises. "By the way, what's his name?"

Mrs. Murray, standing with her face toward the window, leans forward and inclines to this side and that, as if to make perfectly sure before speaking of some fact of vivid interest which seems to have caught her notice, and at the moment Bellingham puts his question summons her sister-in-law in a voice of terrible incrimination and triumph. —"Marion, did you say Leslie had gone out with Maggie Wallace?"

Mrs. Bellingham, indifferently.—"Yes."

Mrs. Murray.—"Will you be kind enough to step here?" Mrs. Bellingham, with a little lady-like surprise, approaches, and Mrs. Murray indicates with a stabbing thrust of her hand, the sight which has so much interested her: "Does *that* look as if it were all over?"

Bellingham, carelessly, as Mrs. Bellingham with great evident distress remains looking in the direction indicated.—"What's the matter now?"

Mrs. Murray. —"Nothing. I merely wished your mother to enjoy a fresh proof of Leslie's discretion. She is returning to tell us that it's out of the question in company with the young man himself."

Bellingham. — "Wha — ha, ha, ha! — *What?*"

Mrs. Murray.—"She is returning with the young man from whom she had just parted for ever."

Bellingham, approaching. — "Oh, come now, aunt."

Mrs. Murray, fiercely.—"Will you look for yourself, if you don't believe me?"

Bellingham.—"Oh, I believe you, fast enough, but as for looking, you know I couldn't tell the man in the moon at this distance, if Leslie happened to be walking home with him. But is the—ah—fat necessarily in the fire, because"— Mrs. Murray whirls away from Bellingham where he remains with his hands on his hips peering over his mother's shoulder, and pounces upon a large opera-glass which stands on the centre-table, and returning with it thrusts it at him. "Eh? What?"

Mrs. Murray, excitedly.—"It 's what we watch the loons on the lake with."

Bellingham.—"Well, but I don't see the application. They 're not loons on the lake."

Mrs. Murray.—"No; but they 're loons on the land, and it comes to the same thing." She vehemently presses the glass upon him.

Bellingham, gravely. — "Do you mean, aunt, that you actually want me to watch my sister through an opera-glass, like a shabby Frenchman at a watering-place? Thanks. I could never look Les in the face again. It's a little too much like eaves-dropping." He folds his arms, and regards his aunt with reproachful amazement, while she dashes back to set the glass on the table again.

Mrs. Bellingham, in great trouble.—"Wait, Kate. Charles, dear, I—I think you must."

Bellingham.—"What?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Yes, you had better look. You will have to proceed in this matter now, and you must form some conclusions beforehand."

Bellingham.—"But mother"—

Mrs. Bellingham, anxiously. — "Don't worry me, Charles. I think you must."

Bellingham.—"All right, mother." He unfolds his arms and accepts the glass from her. "I never knew you to take an unfair advantage, and I'll obey you on trust. But I tell you I don't like it. I don't like it at all,"—getting the focus, with several trials; "I've never stolen sheep, but I think I can realise, now, something of the self-reproach

which misappropriated mutton might bring! *Where* did you say they were? Oh, over there! *I* was looking off here, at that point. They're coming this way, aren't they?" With a start: "Hollo! She's got his arm! Oh, *that* won't do. I'm surprised at Les doing that, unless"—continuing to look—"By Jove! He's not a bad-looking fellow, at all. He— Why, confound it! No, it can't be! Why, yes—no—yes, it is, it *is*—by Heaven, it *is*—by all that's strange it is—BLAKE!" He lets the glass fall; and stands glaring at his aunt and mother, who confront him in speechless mystification.

Mrs. Bellingham. — "Blake? Why, of course it's Blake. We *told* you it was Mr. Blake!"

Bellingham.—"No, I beg your pardon, mother, you didn't! You never told me it was anybody—by name."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Well?"

Bellingham. — "Why, don't you understand, mother? It's *my* Blake!"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"*Your* Blake? *Your*—Charles, what *do* you mean?"

Bellingham.—"Why, I mean that this is the man"—giving his glasses a fresh pinch on his nose with his thumb and forefinger—

"that fished me out of the Mississippi. I flatter myself he couldn't do it now. 'The grossness of my nature would have weight to drag him down,'—*both* of us down. But he 'd try it, and he 'd have the pluck to go down with me if he failed. Come, mother, you see *I* can't do anything in this matter. It 's simply impossible. It 's out of the question."

Mrs. Murray.—"*Why* is it out of the question?"

Bellingham.—"Well, I don't know that I can explain, aunt Kate, if it isn't clear to you, already."

Mrs. Bellingham, recovering from the dismay in which her son's words have plunged her.—"Charles, Charles! Do you mean that this Mr. Blake is the person who saved you from"—

Bellingham.—"From a watery grave? I do, mother."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"There *must* be some mistake. You can't tell at this distance, Charles."

Bellingham.—"There 's no mistake, mother. I should know Blake on the top of Ponkwasset. He was rather more than a casual acquaintance, you see. By Jove, I can't

think of the matter with any sort of repose. I can see it all now, just as if it were somebody else : I was weighted down with my accoutrements, and I went over the side of the boat like a flash, and under that yellow deluge like a bullet. I had just leisure to think what a shame it was my life should go for nothing at a time when we needed men so much, when I felt a grip on my hair," — rubbing his bald spot, — "it couldn't be done now ! Then I knew I was all right, and waited for developments. The only development was Blake. He fought shy of me, if you'll believe it, after that, till I closed with him one day and had it out with him, and convinced him that he had done rather a handsome thing by me. But that was the end of it. I couldn't get him to stand anything else in the way of gratitude. Blake had a vice: he was proud."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"And what became of him ?"

Bellingham.—"Who ? Blake ? He was the engineer of the boat, I ought to explain. He was transferred to a gunboat after that, and I believe he stuck to it throughout the fighting on the Mississippi. It's—let me

see—it's five years now since I saw him in Nebraska, when I went out there to grow up with the country, and found I couldn't wait for it." After a pause: "I don't know what it was about Blake; but he somehow made everybody feel that there was stuff in him. In the three weeks we were together we became great friends, and I must say I never liked a man better. Well, that 's why, aunt Kate."

Mrs. Murray.—"I don't see that it has anything whatever to do with the matter. The question is whether you wish Leslie to marry a man of his station and breeding, or not. His goodness and greatness have nothing to do with it. The fact remains that he is not at all her equal—that he isn't a gentleman"—

Bellingham.—"Oh, come now, aunt Kate. You 're not going to tell me that a man who saved my life isn't a gentleman?"

Mrs. Murray.—"And you 're not going to tell me that a steamboat engineer is a gentleman?"

Bellingham, disconcerted.—"Eh?"

Mrs. Murray.—"The question is, are you going to abandon that unhappy girl to her fancy for a man totally unfit to be her

husband simply because he happened to save your life?"

Bellingham. — "Why, you see, aunt Kate"—

Mrs. Murray.—"Do you think it would be gentlemanly to do it?"

Bellingham.—"Well, if you put it that way, no, I don't. And if you want to know, I don't see my way to behaving like a gentleman in this connection, whatever I do." He scratches his head ruefully: "The fact is that the advantages are all on Blake's side, and he'll have to manage very badly if he doesn't come out the only gentleman in the business." After a moment: "How was it you didn't put the name and the—a —profession together, mother, and reflect that this *was* my Blake?"

Mrs. Bellingham, with plaintive reproach. —"Charles, you know how uncommunicative you were about all your life as a soldier. You never told me half so much about this affair before, and you never—it seems very heartless now that I didn't insist on knowing, but at the time it was only part of the nightmare in which we were living—you never told me his name before."

Bellingham.—"Didn't I? Well! I sup-

posed I had, of course. Um! That was too bad. I say, mother, Blake has never let anything drop that made you think he had ever known me, or done me any little favour, I suppose?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"No, not the slightest hint. If he had only"—

Bellingham.—"Ah, that was like him, confound him!" Bellingham muses again with a hopeless air, and then starts suddenly from his reverie.—"Why, the fact is, you know, mother, Blake is really a magnificent fellow; and you know—well, I *like* him!"

Mrs. Murray.—"Oh! That 's Leslie's excuse!"

Bellingham.—"Eh?"

Mrs. Murray.—"If you are going to take Leslie's part, it 's fortunate you have common ground. *Like* him!"

Bellingham.—"Mother, what is the unhallowed hour for dinner in these wilds? One o'clock? I've a fancy for tackling this business after dinner."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"I 'm afraid, my dear, that it can't be put off. They must be here, soon."

Bellingham, sighing.—"Well! Though they didn't seem to be hurrying."

Mrs. Murray, bitterly.—"If they could only know what a friendly disposition there was towards him here, I'm sure they'd make haste!"

Bellingham.—"Um!"

Mrs. Bellingham, after a pause.—"You don't know anything about his—his—family, do you, Charles?"

Bellingham.—"No, mother, I don't. My impression is that he *has* no family, any more than—Adam; or—protoplasm. All I know about him is that he was from first to last one of those natural gentlemen that upset all your preconceived notions of those things. His associations must have been commoner than—well, it's impossible to compare them to anything satisfactory; but I never saw a trait in him or heard a word from him that wasn't refined. He gave me the impression of a very able man, too, as I was just saying, but where his strength lay, I can't say."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Leslie says he's an inventor."

Bellingham.—"Well, very likely. I remember, now: he was a machinist by trade, I believe, and he was an enlisted man on the boat when the engineer was killed; and Blake

was the man who could step right into his place. It was considered a good thing amongst those people. He was a reader in his way, and most of the time he had some particularly hard-headed book in his hand when he was off duty,—about physics or metaphysics ; used to talk them up now and then, very well. I never had any doubt about his coming out all right. He 's a baffler, Blake is,—at least he is, for me. Now I suppose aunt Kate, here, doesn't find him baffling, at all. She takes our little standards, our little weights and measures, and tests him with them, and she 's perfectly satisfied with the result. It 's a clear case of won't do."

Mrs. Murray.—"Do you say it isn't?"

Bellingham.—"No ; I merely doubt if it is. You don't doubt, and there you have the advantage of me. You always were a selected oyster, aunt Kate, and you always knew that you couldn't be improved upon. Now I 'm a selected oyster, too, apparently, but I 'm not certain that I 'm the best choice that could have been made. I 'm a *huitre de mon siècle ;* I am the ill-starred mollusk that doubts. Of course we can't go counter to the theory that God once created people and no-people,

and that they have nothing to do but to go on reproducing themselves and leave him at leisure for the rest of eternity. But really, aunt Kate, I have seen some things in my time—and I don't mind saying Blake is one of them—that made me think the Creator was still—active. I admit that it sounds "—fitting his glasses on—"rather absurd for an old diner-out like myself to say it."

Mrs. Murray, with energy.—"All this is neither here nor there, Charles, and you know it. The simple question is, whether you wish your sister to marry a man whose past you 'll be ashamed to be frank about. I 'll admit, if you like, that he 's quite our equal,—our superior; but what are you going to do with your ex-steamboat engineer in society?"

Bellingham, dubiously.—"Well, it would be rather awkward."

Mrs. Murray.—"How will you introduce him, and what will you say to people about his family and his station and business? Or do you mean to banish yourself and give up the world which you find so comfortable for the boon of a brother-in-law whom you don't really know from Adam?"

Bellingham.—"Well, I must allow the

force of your argument. Yes,"—after a gloomy little reverie,—"you 're right. It won't do. It *is* out of the question. I'll put an end to it,—if it doesn't put an end to me. That 'weird seizure' as of misappropriated mutton oppresses me again. Mother, I think you 'd better go away,—you and aunt Kate,—and let me meet him and Leslie here alone, when they come in. Or, I say; if you could detach Les, and let him come in here by himself, somehow? I don't suppose it can be done. Nothing seems disposed to let itself be done."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles, I'm sorry this disagreeable business should fall to you."

Bellingham.—"Oh, don't mind it, mother. What 's a brother for, if he can't be called upon to break off his sister's love affairs? But I don't deny it 's a nasty business."

Mrs. Murray, in retiring.—"I sincerely hope he 'll make it so for you, and cure you of your absurdities."

II.

BELLINGHAM *and* MRS. BELLINGHAM; LESLIE *and* BLAKE, *without.*

Bellingham.—"O Parthian shaft! Wish me well out of it, mother!"

Mrs. Bellingham, sighing.—"I do, Charles; I do with all my heart. You have the most difficult duty that a gentleman ever had to perform. I don't see how you 're to take hold of it; I don't, indeed."

Bellingham.—"Well, it *is* embarrassing. But it 's a noble cause, and I suppose Heaven will befriend me. The trouble is, don't you know, I haven't got any—any point of view, any tenable point of view. It won't do to act simply in our own interest; *we* can't do *that*, mother; we 're not the sort. I must try to do it in Blake's behalf, and that 's what I don't see my way to, exactly. What I wish to do is to make my interference a magnanimous benefaction to Blake,—some-

thing that he 'll recognise in after years with gratitude as a—a mysterious Providence. If I 've got to be a snob, mother, I wish to be a snob on the highest possible grounds."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Don't use that word, Charles. It 's shocking."

Bellingham.—"Well, I won't, mother. I say: can't you think of some disqualifications in Leslie, that I could make a *point d'appui* in a conscientious effort to serve Blake?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles!"

Bellingham.—"I mean, isn't she rather a worldly, frivolous, fashionable spirit, devoted to pleasure, and incapable of sympathising with—with his higher moods, don't you know? Something like that?" Bellingham puts his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets and inclines towards his mother with a hopeful smile.

Mrs. Bellingham.—"No, Charles; you know she is nothing of the kind. She 's a girl and she likes amusement, but I should like to see the man whose moods were too lofty for Leslie. She is everything that 's generous and true and high-minded."

Bellingham, scratching his head.—"That 's bad! Then she isn't—ah—she hasn't any

[illegible] of extravagance that would unfit her to be the wife of a poor man who—ah—had his way to make in the world?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"She never spends half her allowance on herself; and besides, Charles (how ridiculously you talk!), she has all that money your uncle left her, and if she marries him, he won't be poor any longer."

Bellingham, eagerly.—"And that would ruin his career! Still"—after a moment's thought—"I don't see how I'm to use that idea, exactly. No, I shall have to fall back on the good old ground that it's simply—out of the question. I think that's good; it has a thorough, logical, and final sound. I shall stick to that. Well, leave me to my fate! —Hollo! That's Blake's voice, now. I don t wonder it takes Leslie. It's the most sympathetic voice in the world. They're coming up here, aren't they? You'd better go, mother. I wish you could have got Leslie away"—

Leslie, without.—"Wait for me, there. I must go to mamma's room at once, and tell her everything."

Blake, without.—"Of course. And say that I wish to see her."

Leslie.—"Good-bye."

Blake.—"Good-bye."

Leslie.—"We won't keep you long. *Good*-bye."

Blake.—"*Good*-bye." As he enters one of the parlour doors, flushed and radiant, Mrs. Bellingham retreats through the other.

III.

BLAKE *and* BELLINGHAM.

Bellingham, coming promptly forward to greet Blake, with both hands extended.—"Blake!"

Blake, after a moment of stupefaction.—"Bellingham!"

Bellingham.—"My dear old fellow!" He wrings Blake fervently by the left hand. "This is the most astonishing thing in the world! To find you here—in New England—with my people; it 's the most wonderful thing that ever was! They 've been—ah—been telling me all about you, my mother has; and I want to thank you—you look uncommonly well, Blake, and not a day older! Do you mean to go through life with that figure?—thank you for all you 've done for them; and—I don't know: what does a man say to a fellow who has behaved as you did in that business with the tramps?"

—wringing Blake's left hand again and gently touching his right arm in its sling. "By Jove, old fellow! I don't know what to say, to *you*; I— Do you think it was quite the thing, though, not to intimate that you 'd known *me?* Come, now; that wasn't fair. It wasn't frank. It wasn't like *you*, Blake. Hey?" He affectionately presses Blake's hand at every emphatic word.

Blake, releasing himself.—"I didn't like it: but I couldn't help it. It would have seemed to claim something, and I should have had to allow—they would have found out"—

Bellingham.—"That you happened to save my life, once. Well, upon my word, I don't think it was a thing to be ashamed of; at least, at that time; I was in the army, then. At present—I don't know that I should blame you for hushing the matter up."

Blake, who has turned uneasily away, and has apparently not been paying the closest attention to Bellingham's reproaches, but now confronts him.—"I suppose you're a gentleman, Bellingham."

Bellingham, taking the abruptness of Blake's question with amiable irony.—"There have been moments in which I have flattered my-

self to that degree; even existence itself is problematical, to my mind, at other times: but—well, yes, I suppose I am a gentleman. The term 's conventional. And then?"

Blake.—"I mean that you 're a fair-minded, honest man, and that I can talk to you without the risk of being misunderstood or having any sort of meanness attributed to me?"

Bellingham.—"I should have to be a much shabbier fellow than I am, for anything of that sort, Blake."

Blake.—"I didn't expect to find you here; I was expecting to speak with your mother. But I don't see why I shouldn't say to you what I have to say. In fact, I think I can say it better to you."

Bellingham.—"Thanks, Blake; you 'll always find me your— That is—well, go ahead!"

Blake.—"You don't think I 'm a man to do anything sneaking, do you?"

Bellingham.—"Again? My dear fellow, that goes without saying. It 's out of the question."

Blake, walking up and down, and stopping from time to time while he speaks in a tone of passionate self-restraint.—"Well, I 'm

glad to hear that, because I know that to some the thing might have a different look." After a pause, in which Blake takes another turn round the room and arrives in front of Bellingham again: "If your people have been telling you about me, I suppose they 've hinted—but I don't care to know it—that they think I 'm in love with Miss Bellingham, your sister. I am!" He looks at Bellingham, who remains impassive behind the glitter of his eye-glasses: "Do you see any reason why I shouldn't be?"

Bellingham, reluctantly.—"N-no."

Blake.—"I believe—no, I *can't* believe it!—but I *know* that Miss Bellingham permits it; that she— I can't say it! Is there any—any reason why I shouldn't ask her mother's leave to ask her to be my wife? Why, of course, there *is*!—a thousand, million reasons in my unworthiness; I know that. But is there"—

Bellingham, abruptly.—"Blake, my dear fellow—my dear, good old boy—it won't do; it 's out of the question! It is, it is indeed! It won't do at all. Confound it, man! You know I like you, that I 've always wanted to be a great deal more your friend than you would ever let me. Don't

ask me why, but take my word for it when I tell you it 's out of the question. There are a thousand reasons, as you say, though there isn't one of them in any fault of yours, old fellow. But I can't give them. It won't do !" Bellingham in his turn begins to walk up and down the room with a face of acute misery and hopelessness, and at the last word he stops and stares helplessly into Blake's eyes, who has remained in his place.

Blake, with suppressed feeling.—" Do you expect me to be satisfied with that answer ?"

Bellingham, at first confused and then with a burst of candour.—" No ; I wouldn't, myself." His head falls, and a groan breaks from his lips : " This is the roughest thing I ever knew of. Hang it, Blake, don't you see what a—a—box I 'm in ? People pulling and hauling at me, and hammering away on all sides, till I don't know which end I 'm standing on ! You wouldn't like it yourself. Why do you ask ? Why must you be—ah —satisfied ? Come ! Why don't you let it all—go ?"

Blake.—" Upon my word, Bellingham, you talk "—

Bellingham.—" Like a fool ! I know it. And it 's strictly in character. At the pre-

sent moment I *feel* like a fool. I *am* a fool! By Jove, if I ever supposed I should get into such a tight place as this! Why, don't you see, Blake, what an extremely unfair advantage you have of me? Deuce take it, man, *I* have some rights in the matter, too, I fancy!"

Blake, bewildered. — "Rights? Advantage? I don't understand all this."

Bellingham.—"How not understand?"

Blake, gazing in mystified silence at Bellingham for a brief space, and then resuming more steadily.—"There 's some objection to me, that 's clear enough. I don't make any claim, but you would think I ought to know what the matter is, wouldn't you?"

Bellingham.—"Y-yes, Blake."

Blake.—"I know that I 'm ten years older than Miss Bellingham, and that it might look as if"—

Bellingham, hastily.—"Oh, not in the least—not in the least!"

Blake.—"Our acquaintance wasn't regularly made, I believe. But you don't suppose that I urged it, or that it would have been kept up if it hadn't been for their kindness and for chances that nobody foresaw?"

Bellingham.—"There isn't a circumstance of the whole affair that isn't perfectly honourable to you, Blake—that isn't *like* you. Confound it"—

Blake.—"I won't ask you whether you think I thought of her being rich?"

Bellingham.—"No, sir! That would be offensive."

Blake.—"Then what is it? Is there some personal objection to me with your family?"

Bellingham.—"There isn't at all, Blake, I assure you."

Blake.—"Then I don't understand, and"—with rising spirit—"I want to say once for all that I think your leaving me to ask these things and put myself on the defensive in this way, begging you for this reason and for that, isn't what I'm used to. But I'm like a man on trial for his life, and I stand it. Now, go on and say what there is to say. Don't spare my feelings, man! I have no pride where *she* is concerned. What do you know against me that makes it impossible?"

Bellingham.—"O Lord! It isn't *against* you. It's nothing personal; personally we've all reason to respect and honour you; you've done us nothing but good in the

handsomest way. But it won't do for all that. There 's an incompatibility—a—a—*I* don't know what to call it! Confound it, Blake! You know very well that there 's none of that cursed nonsense about me. *I* don't care what a man is in life; I only ask what he is in himself. I accept the American plan in good faith. I know all sorts of fellows; devilish good fellows some of them are, too! Why, I had that Mitchell, who behaved so well at the Squattick Mills disaster, to dine with me; went down and looked him up, and had him to dine with me. Some of the men didn't think it was the thing; but I can assure you that he talked magnificently about the affair. I drew him out, and before we were done we had the whole room about us. I wouldn't have missed it on any account. That 's *my* way."

Blake, drily.—"It 's a very magnanimous way. The man must have felt honoured."

Bellingham.—"What?—Oh, deuce take it! *I* don't mean any of that patronising rot, you know I don't. You know I think such a man as that ten times as good as myself. What I mean is that it 's different with women. They haven't got the same—

what shall I say — horizons, social horizons, don't you know? *They* can't accept a man for what he is in himself. They have to take him for what he *isn't* in himself. They have to have their world carried on upon the European plan, in short. I don't know whether I make myself understood"—

Blake, with hardness. — "Yes, you do. The objection is to my having been"—

Bellingham, hastily interposing.—"Well —ah—no! I can't admit that. It isn't the occupation. We've all been occupied more or less remotely in—in some sort of thing; a man's a fool who tries to blink that. But I don't know that I can make it clear how our belonging, now, to a different order of things makes our women distrustful—I won't say sceptical, but anxious—as to the influence of — ah — other social circumstances. They're mere creatures of tradition, women are, and where you or I, Blake,"—with caressing good comradeship and the assumption of an impartial high-mindedness,— "wouldn't care a straw for a man's trade or profession, *they* are more disposed to—ah—particularise, and — don't you know—distinguish!"

Blake, gravely.—"I tried to make Miss Bellingham understand from the first just what I was and had been. I certainly never concealed anything. Do you think she would care for what disturbs the other ladies of your family?"

Bellingham.—"Leslie? Well, she's still a very young girl, and she has streaks of originality that rather disqualify her for appreciating—ah— She's romantic! I'm sure I'm greatly obliged to you, Blake, for taking the thing in this reasonable way. You know how to sympathise with one's extreme reluctance—and—ah—embarrassment in putting a case of the kind."

Blake, with a sad, musing tone.—"Yes, God knows I'm sorry for you. I don't suppose you like to do it."

Bellingham.—"Thanks, thanks, Blake. It was quite as much on your own account that I spoke. They would make it deucedly uncomfortable for you in the family,—there's no end to the aunts and grandmothers, and things, and you'd make them uncomfortable too, with your—history." Mopping his forehead with his handkerchief: "You have it infernally hot, up here, don't you?"

Blake, still musingly.—"Then you think

that Miss Bellingham herself wouldn't be seriously distressed?"

Bellingham.—"Leslie 's a girl that will go through anything she 's made up her mind to. And if she likes you well enough to marry you"—

Blake.—"She says so."

Bellingham.—"Then burning ploughshares wouldn't have the smallest effect upon her. But"—

Blake, quietly.—"Then I won't give her up."

Bellingham.—"Eh?"

Blake.—"I won't give her up. It 's bad enough as it is, but if I were such a sneak as to leave the woman who loved me because my marrying her would be awkward for her friends, I should be ten thousand times unworthier than I am. I am going to hold to my one chance of showing myself worthy to win her, and if she will have me I will have *her*, though it smashes the whole social structure. Bellingham, you 're mistaken about this thing; her happiness won't depend upon the success of the aunts and cousins in accounting for me to the world; it 'll depend upon whether I 'm man enough to be all the world to her. If she thinks I am, I *will* be!"

Bellingham.—"Oh, don't talk in that illogical way, Blake. Confound it! I know; I can account for your state of feeling, and all that; but I do assure you it's mistaken. Let me put it to you. You don't see this matter as I do; you can't. The best part of a woman's life is social"—

Blake.—"I don't believe that."

Bellingham.—"Well, no matter: it's so; and whether you came into Leslie's world or took her out of it, you 'd make no end of—of —row. She 'd suffer in a thousand ways."

Blake.—"Not if she loved me, and was the kind of girl I take her to be."

Bellingham.—"Oh yes, she would, my dear fellow; Leslie's a devilish proud girl; she 'd suffer in secret, but it would try her pride in ways you don't know of. Why, only consider: she 's taken by surprise in this affair; she 's had no time to think"—

Blake.—"She shall have my whole lifetime to make up her mind in; she shall test me in every way she will, and she may fling me away at any moment she will, and I will be her slave for ever. She may give me up, but I will not give her up."

Bellingham.—"Well, well! We won't dispute about terms, but I 'll put it to you, your-

self, Blake,—yourself. I want you to see that I 'm acting for your good, that I 'm your friend."

Blake.—"You 're her brother, and you 're my friend, whatever you say. I 've borne to have you insinuate that I 'm your inferior. Go on!" Blake's voice trembles.

Bellingham.—"Oh, now! Don't take that tone! It isn't fair. It makes me feel like—like the very devil. It does, indeed. I don't mean anything of the kind. I mean simply that—that—ah—remote circumstances over which you had—ah—no control, have placed you at a disadvantage,—social disadvantage. That 's all. It isn't a question of inferiority or superiority. And I merely put it to you—as a friend, mind—whether the happiness of—ah—all concerned couldn't be more promptly—ah—secured by your refusing to submit to tests that might— Come now, my dear fellow! She 's flattered—any woman might be—by your liking her; but when she went back to her own associations—"

Blake.—"If she sees any man she likes better than me, I won't claim her. But I can't judge her by a loyalty less than my own. She will never change." Bellingham essays an answer, but after some preliminary ahs

and ums, abruptly desists, and guards an evidently troubled silence, which Blake assails with jealous quickness: "What do you mean? Out with it, man!"

Bellingham.—"Don't take it in that way! My dear fellow"—

Blake.—"If I'm her caprice and not her choice, I want to know it! I won't be killed by inches. Speak!"

Bellingham.—"Stop! I owe you my life, but you mustn't take that tone with me."

Blake.—"You owe me nothing,—nothing but an answer. If you mean there has been some one before me— *She* has told me that she never cared for any one but me; I believe her, but I want to know what you mean."

Bellingham.—"She's my sister! What do *you* mean?"

IV.

LESLIE, BLAKE, *and* BELLINGHAM.

Leslie.—"Oh, what *does* it mean?" She enters the room, as if she had been suddenly summoned by the sound of their angry voices from a guiltless ambush in the hall. At the sight of their flushed faces and defiant attitudes she flutters, electrically attracted, first toward one and then toward the other, but at last she instinctively takes shelter at Blake's elbow: "Charles, what are you saying? What are you both so angry for? Oh, I hoped to find you such good friends, and here you are quarrelling! Charles, what have you been doing? O Charles, I always thought you were so generous and magnanimous, and have *you* been joining that odious conspiracy against *us?* For shame! And what have you found to say, I should like to know? I should *like to* know what you've found to say—what a

gentleman COULD say, under the circumstances!" She grows more vehement as their mutual embarrassment increases upon the men, and Bellingham fades into a blank dismay behind the glitter of his eye-glasses. "Have you been saying something you're ashamed of, Charles? You *couldn't* say anything about *him*, and so you've been trying to set him against *me*. *What* have you said about your sister, Charles?—and always pretending to be so fond of me! Oh, oh, oh!" Miss Bellingham snatches her handkerchief from her pocket and hides her grief in it, while her brother remains in entire petrifaction at her prescience.

Bellingham, finally. — "Why, Leslie — Deuce take it all, Blake, why don't *you* say something? I tell you, I haven't *said* anything against you, Les. Blake will tell you himself that I was merely endeavouring to set the thing before him from different points of view. I wanted him to consider the shortness of your acquaintance"—

Leslie, in her handkerchief.—"It's fully three weeks since we met,—you *know* it is."

Bellingham. — "And I wanted him to reflect upon how very different all your associations and—traditions—were"—

Leslie, still in her handkerchief.—"Oh, *that* was delicate—very!"

Bellingham.—"And to—ah—take into consideration the fact that returning to another—atmosphere—surroundings, you might—ah—change."

Leslie, lifting her face.—"You did! Charles, did I *ever* change?"

Bellingham.—"Well, I don't know. I don't know whether you 'd call it *changing*, exactly; but I certainly got the impression from aunt Kate that there was some hope on Dudley's part last summer"—

Leslie, quitting her refuge and advancing fiercely upon the dismayed but immoveable Bellingham with her right hand thrust rigidly down at her side, and her left held behind her clutching her handkerchief.—"Charles, have you *dared* to intimate that I ever cared the least thing about that—that—horrid—little—reptile? When you *knew* that my life was made perfectly ghastly by the way aunt Kate forced him on me, and it was as much as I could ever do to treat him decently! I never encouraged him for an *instant*, and you know it. Oh, Charley, Charley, how could you? It isn't for myself I care; it 's for you, for you 're a *gentleman*,

and you let yourself do that! How painfully strange that low, mean, shabby feeling must have been to you! I don't wonder you couldn't face me or speak to me. I don't"—

Bellingham, desperately.—"Here; hold on! Good Lord? I can't stand this! Confound it, I 'm not made of granite—or gutta-percha. I 'll allow it was sneaking,—Blake will tell you I looked it,—but it was a desperate case. It was a family job, and I had to do my best—or my worst—as the head of the family; and Blake wouldn't hear reason, and"—

Leslie.—"And so you thought you 'd try *fraud!*"

Bellingham.—"Well, I shouldn't use that word. But it 's the privilege of your sex to call a spade a pitchfork, if you don't like the spade. I tell you I never professed to know anything personally about the Dudley business, and I didn't *say* anything about it; when Blake caught me up so, I was embarrassed to think how I might have mentioned it in — in the heat of argument. Come, Blake"—

Leslie, turning and going devoutly up to Blake. — "Yes, *he* will defend you. *He*

must save your honour since he saved your life."

Bellingham, with a start.—"Eh?"

Leslie.—"Oh, I know about it! Mamma told me. She thinks just as I do, now, and she has been feeling dreadfully about this shabby work she'd set you at; but I comforted her. I told her you would never do it in the world; that you would just shuffle about in your way"—

Bellingham.—"Oh, thanks!"

Leslie.—"But that you had too good a heart, too high a spirit, to breathe a syllable that would wound the pride of a brave and generous man to whom you owed life itself: that you would rather *die* than do it!" To Blake: "Oh, I've always been a romantic girl,—you won't mind it in me, will you?—and I've had my foolish dreams a thousand times about the man who risked his life to save my brother's; and I hoped and longed that some day we should meet. I promised myself that I should know him, and I always thought how sweet and dear a privilege it would be to thank him. I want to thank you for his life as I used to dream of doing, but I cannot yet. I cannot till you tell me that he has not said one word

unworthy of you—unworthy of a gentleman!"

Blake, smiling.—"He 's all right!"

Leslie, impetuously clinging to him.—"Oh, thanks, thanks, thanks!"

Bellingham, accurately focusing the pair with freshly adjusted glasses.—"If you 'll both give me your blessing, now, I 'll go away, feeling perfectly rehabilitated, in the afternoon stage."

V.

MRS. BELLINGHAM, *and* LESLIE, BLAKE, *and* BELLINGHAM; *afterwards* MRS. MURRAY.

Mrs. Bellingham, entering the parlour door.—"Stage? Why, Mr. Blake isn't going away!"

Bellingham.—"Oh, no, Mr. Blake has kindly consented to remain. It was I who thought of going. I can't bear to be idle!"

Mrs. Bellingham, apart from the others.—"Charles, dear, I'm sorry I asked you to undertake that disagreeable business, and I'd have come back at once, with Leslie to relieve you,—to tell you that you needn't speak after all,—but she felt sure that you wouldn't, and she insisted upon leaving you together, and then stealing back upon you and enjoying"—

Bellingham, solemnly.—"You little knew me, mother. I have the making of an

iron-hearted parent in me, and I was crushing all hope out of Blake when Leslie came in."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles, you don't mean that you said anything to wound the feelings of a man to whom you owed your life,—to whom we *all* owe so much?"

Bellingham.—"I don't know about his *feelings*. But I represented pretty distinctly to him the social incompatibility."

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles, I wonder at you!"

Bellingham.—"Oh, yes! So do I. But if you'll take the pains to recall the facts, that's exactly what you left me to do. May I ask what has caused you to change your mind?"

Mrs. Bellingham, earnestly.—"I found that Leslie's happiness really depended upon it; and in fact, Charles, when I came to reflect, I found that I myself liked him."

Bellingham.—"The words have a familiar sound,—as if I had used them myself in a former existence." Turning from his mother and looking about: "I seem to miss a—a support— moral support—in those present. Where is aunt Kate?"

Mrs. Murray, appearing at the door.—

"Marion! Ma"— She hesitates at sight of the peaceful grouping.

Bellingham.—"Ah, this is indeed opportune! Come in, aunt Kate, come in! This is a free fight, as they say in Mr. Blake's section. Any one can join." Mrs. Murray advances wonderingly into the room, and Bellingham turns to his sister, where she stands at Blake's side: "Leslie, you think I've behaved very unhandsomely in this matter, don't you?"

Leslie, plaintively.—"Charley, you know I hate to blame you. But I never could have believed it if any one else had told me."

Bellingham. —"All right. Mother, I understand that you would have been similarly incredulous?"

Mrs. Bellingham. —"I know that you acted from a good motive, Charles, but you certainly went to an extreme that I could never have expected."

Bellingham.—"All right, again. Blake, if the persons and relations had all been changed, could you have said to me what I said to you?"

Blake.—"That isn't a fair question, Bellingham."

Bellingham.—"All right, as before. Now,

aunt Kate, I appeal to you. You know all the circumstances in which I was left here with this man who saved my life, who rescued Leslie from those tramps, who has done you all a thousand kindnesses of various sorts and sizes, who has behaved with the utmost delicacy and discretion throughout, and is in himself a thoroughly splendid fellow. Do you think I did right or wrong to set plainly before him the social disadvantages to which his marrying Leslie would put us?"

Mrs. Murray, instantly and with great energy.—"Charles, *I* say—and every person in society, *except* your mother and sister, would say—that you did exactly right!"

Bellingham.—"That settles it. Blake, my dear old fellow, I beg your pardon with all my heart; and I ask you to forget, if you can, every word I said. Confound society!" He offers his hand to Blake, who seizes it and wrings it in his own.

Leslie, as she flings her arms round his neck, with a fluttering cry of joy.—"Oh, Charley, Charley, I've got my ideal back again!"

Bellingham, disengaging her arms and putting her hand into Blake's.—"Both of

them." Turning to Mrs. Murray: "And now, aunt, I beg *your* pardon. What do you say?"

Mrs. Murray, frozenly.—"Charles, you know my principles."

Bellingham.—"They 're identical on all points with my own. Well?"

Mrs. Murray, grimly.—"Well, then, you know that I never would abandon my family, whatever happened!"

Bellingham.—"By Jove, that isn't so bad. We must be satisfied to take your forgiveness as we get it. Perhaps Leslie might object to the formulation of"—

Leslie, super-joyously.—"Oh, no! I object to nothing in the world, now, Charles. Aunt Kate is *too* good! I never should have thought of asking her to remain with us."

Bellingham.—"*That* isn't so bad, either! You are your aunt's own niece. Come, Blake, we can't let this go on. Say something to allay the ill feeling you 've created in this family."

Blake.—"I think I 'd better not try. But if you 'll give me time, I 'll do my best to live down the objections to me."

Bellingham.—"Oh, you 've done that. What we want now—as I understand aunt

Kate—is that you should live down the objections to us. One thing that puzzles me"—thoughtfully scratching the sparse parting of his hair—"is that our position is so very equivocal in regard to the real principle involved. It seems to me that we are begging the whole question, which is, if Blake"—

Leslie.—"There, there! I *knew* he would!"

Bellingham, severely.—"Mother, you will allow that I have been left to take the brunt of this little affair in a—well, somewhat circuitous manner?"

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles, I am very, very sorry"—

Bellingham.—"And that I am entitled to some sort of reparation?"

Leslie.—"Don't allow that, mamma! I know he's going to say something disagreeable. He looks just as he always does when he has one of his ideas."

Bellingham.—"Thanks, Miss Bellingham. I am going to have this particular satisfaction out of *you*. Then I will return to my habitual state of agreeable vacancy. Mother"—

Leslie.—"Mamma, don't answer him! It's the only way."

Bellingham.—"It is not necessary that I should be answered. I only wish to have the floor. The question is, if Blake were merely a gentleman somewhat at odds with his history, associations, and occupation, and not also our benefactor and preserver in so many ways,—whether we should be so ready to—ah"—

Mrs. Bellingham.—"Charles, dear, I think it is unnecessary to enter into these painful minutiæ."

Mrs. Murray.—"I feel bound to say that I know we should not."

Bellingham.—"This is the point which I wished to bring out. Blake, here is your opportunity: renounce us!"

Blake.—"What do you say, Leslie?"

Leslie.—"I say that I don't believe it, and I know that I like you for yourself,—not for what you've done for us. I did from the first moment, before you spoke or saw me. But if you doubt me, or should ever doubt me"—

Blake, taking in his left both the little hands that she has appealingly laid upon his arms.—"That's out of the question!"

AT THE SIGN OF THE SAVAGE.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SAVAGE.

AS they bowled along in the deliberate German express train through the Black Forest, Colonel Kenton said he had only two things against the region: it was not black, and it was not a forest. He had all his life heard of the Black Forest, and he hoped he knew what it was. The inhabitants burned charcoal, high up the mountains, and carved toys in the winter when shut in by the heavy snows; they had Easter eggs all the year round; with overshot mill-wheels in the valleys, and cherry-trees all about, always full of blossoms or ripe fruit, just as you liked to think. They were very poor people, but very devout, and lived in little villages on a friendly intimacy with their cattle. The young women of these hamlets had each a long braid of yellow hair down her back,

blue eyes, and a white bodice with a cat's-cradle lacing behind; the men had bell-crowned hats and spindle-legs; they buttoned the breath out of their bodies with round pewter buttons on tight, short crimson waistcoats.

"Now, here," said the colonel, breathing on the window of the car and rubbing a little space clear of the frost, "I see nothing of the sort. Either I have been imposed upon by what I have heard of the Black Forest, or this is not the Black Forest. I'm inclined to believe that there is no Black Forest, and never was. There isn't," he added, looking again, so as not to speak hastily, "a charcoal-burner, or an Easter egg, or a cherry blossom, or a yellow braid, or a red waistcoat, to enliven the whole desolate landscape. What are we to think of it, Bessie?"

Mrs. Kenton, who sat opposite, huddled in speechless comfort under her wraps and rugs, and was just trying to decide in her own mind whether it was more delicious to let her feet, now that they were thoroughly warm, rest upon the carpet-covered cylinder of hot water, or hover just a hair's breadth above it without touching it, answered a little impatiently that she did not know.

In ordinary circumstances she would not have been so short with the colonel's nonsense. She thought that was the way all men talked when they got well acquainted with you, and as coming from a sex incapable of seriousness, she could have excused it if it had not interrupted her in her solution of so nice a problem. Colonel Kenton, however, did not mind. He at once possessed himself of much more than his share of the cylinder, extorting a cry of indignation from his wife, who now saw herself reduced from a fastidious choice of luxuries to a mere vulgar strife for the necessaries of life,—a thing any woman abhors.

"Well, well," said the colonel, "keep your old hot-water bottle. If there was any other way of warming my feet I wouldn't touch it. It makes me sick to use it; I feel as if the doctor was going to order me some boneset tea. Give *me* a good red-hot patent car-heater, that smells enough of burning iron to make your head ache in a minute and sets your car on fire as soon as it rolls over the embankment. That 's what *I* call comfort. A hot-water bottle shoved under your feet—I should suppose I *was* a woman, and a feeble one at that. I 'll tell you what *I*

think about this Black Forest business, Bessie: I think it 's part of a system of deception that runs through the whole German character. I have heard the Germans praised for their sincerity and honesty, but I tell you they have got to work hard to convince me of it, from this out. I am on my guard. I am not going to be taken in any more."

It became the colonel's pleasure to develop and exemplify this idea at all points of their progress through Germany. They were going to Italy, and as Mrs. Kenton had had enough of the sea in coming to Europe, they were going to Italy by the only all-rail route then existing: from Paris to Vienna, and so down through the Simmering to Trieste and Venice. Wherever they stopped, whatever they did before reaching Vienna, Colonel Kenton chose to preserve his guarded attitude. "Ah, they pretend this is Stuttgart, do they?" he said on arriving at the Suabian capital. "A likely story! They pretended that was the Black Forest, you know, Bessie." At Munich, "And this is Munich!" he sneered, whenever the conversation flagged during their sojourn. "It 's outrageous, the way they let these swindling little towns palm themselves off upon the

traveller for cities he 's heard of. This place will be calling itself Berlin, next." When his wife, guide-book in hand, was struggling to heat her admiration at some cold history of Kaulbach, and in her failure clinging fondly to the fact that Kaulbach had painted it, "Kaulbach!" the colonel would exclaim, and half close his eyes and slowly nod his head and smile. "What guide-book is that you 've got, Bessie?" looking curiously at the volume he knew so well. "Oh!—Baedeker! And are you going to let a Black Forest Dutchman like Baedeker persuade you that this daub is by Kaulbach? Come! That 's a little too much!" He rejected the birthplaces of famous persons one and all; they could not drive through a street or into a park, whose claims to be this or that street or park he did not boldly dispute; and he visited a pitiless incredulity upon the dishes of the *table-d'hôte*, concerning which he always answered his wife's questions: "Oh, he *says* it 's beef," or veal, or fowl, as the case might be; and though he never failed to relish his own dinner, strange fears began to affect the appetite of Mrs. Kenton. It happened that he never did come out with these sneers before other travellers, but his

wife was always expecting him to do so, and afterwards portrayed herself as ready to scream, the whole time. She was not a nervous person, and regarding the colonel's jokes as part of the matrimonial contract, she usually bore them, as I have hinted, with severe composure, accepting them all, good, bad, and indifferent, as something in the nature of man which she should understand better after they had been married longer. The present journey was made just after the close of the war; they had seen very little of each other while he was in the army, and it had something of the fresh interest of a bridal tour. But they sojourned only a day or two in the places between Strasburg and Vienna; it was very cold and very unpleasant getting about; and they instinctively felt what every wise traveller knows, that it is folly to be lingering in Germany when you can get into Italy; and so they hurried on.

It was nine o'clock one night when they reached Salzburg, and when their baggage had been visited and their passports examined, they had still half an hour to wait before the train went on. They profited by the delay to consider what hotel they should

stop at in Vienna, and they advised with their Bradshaw on the point. This railway guide gave in its laconic fashion several hotels, and specified the Kaiserin Elisabeth as one at which there was a table-d'hôte, briefly explaining that at most hotels in Vienna there was none.

"That settles it," said Mrs. Kenton. "We will go to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, of course. I'm sure I never want the bother of ordering dinner in English, let alone German, which never was meant for human beings to speak."

"It's a language you can't tell the truth in," said the colonel, thoughtfully. "You can't call an open country an open country; you have to call it a Black Forest." Mrs. Kenton sighed patiently. "But I don't know about this Kaiserin Elisabeth business. How do we know that's the *real* name of the hotel? How can *we* be sure that it isn't an *alias*, an assumed name, trumped up for the occasion? I tell you, Bessie, we can't be too cautious as long as we're in this fatherland of lies. What guide-book is this? Baedeker? Oh! Bradshaw. Well, that's some comfort. Bradshaw's an Englishman, at least. If it had been Baedeker"—

"Oh, Edward, Edward!" Mrs. Kenton burst out. "Will you *never* give that up? Here you 've been harping on it for the last four days, and worrying my life out with it. I think it 's unkind. It 's perfectly bewildering me. I don't know where or what I am any more." Some tears of vexation started to her eyes, at which Colonel Kenton put the shaggy arm of his overcoat round her, and gave her an honest hug.

"Well," he said, "I give it up, from this out. Though I shall always say that it was a joke that wore well. And I can tell you, Bessie, that it 's no small sacrifice to give up a joke that you 've just got into prime working order, so that you can use it on almost anything that comes up. But that 's a thing that you can never understand. Let it all pass. We 'll go to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, and submit to any sort of imposition they 've a mind to practise upon us. I shall not breathe freely, I suppose, till we get into Italy, where people mean what they say. Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the colonel, "honest Iago 's the man *I 'm* after."

The doors of the waiting-room were thrown open, and cries of "Erste Klasse! Zweite Klasse! Dritte Klasse!" summoned the

variously assorted passengers to carriages of their several degrees. The colonel lifted his little wife into a non-smoking first-class carriage, and established her against the cushioned barrier dividing the two seats, so that her feet could just reach the hot-water bottle, as he called it, and tucked her in and built her up so with wraps that she was a prodigy of comfort; and then folding about him the long fur-lined coat which she had bought him at Munich (in spite of his many protests that the fur was artificial), he sat down on the seat opposite, and proudly enjoyed the perfect content that beamed from Mrs. Kenton's face, looking so small from her heap of luxurious coverings.

"Well, Bessie, this would be very pleasant—if you could believe in it," he said, as the train smoothly rolled out of the station. "But of course it can't be genuine. There must be some dodge about it. I've no doubt you'll begin to feel perfectly horrid, the first thing you know."

Mrs. Kenton let him go on; as he did at some length, and began to drowse, while he amused himself with a gross parody of things she had said during the past four days. In those years while their wedded bliss was yet

practically new, Colonel Kenton found his wife an inexhaustible source of mental refreshment. He prized beyond measure the feminine inadequacy and excess of her sayings; he had stored away such a variety of these that he was able to talk her personal parlance for an hour together; indeed, he had learnt the trick of inventing phrases so much in her manner that Mrs. Kenton never felt quite safe in disowning any monstrous thing attributed to her. Her drowse now became a little nap, and presently a delicious doze, in which she drifted far away from actual circumstance into a realm where she seemed to exist as a mere airy thought of her physical self; suddenly she lost this thought, and slept through all stops at stations and all changes of the hot-water cylinder, to renew which the guard, faithful to Colonel Kenton's bribe, alone opened the door.

"Wake up, Bessie," she heard her husband saying. "We 're at Vienna."

It seemed very improbable, but she did not dispute it. "What time is it?" she asked, as she suffered herself to be lifted from the carriage into the keen air of the winter night.

"Three o'clock," said the colonel, hurrying

her into the waiting-room, where she sat, still somewhat remote from herself but getting nearer and nearer, while he went off about the baggage. "Now, then," he cried cheerfully when he returned; and he led his wife out and put her into a *fiacre*. The driver bent from his perch and arrested the colonel, as he was getting in after Mrs. Kenton, with words in themselves unintelligible, but so probably in demand for neglected instructions that the colonel said, "Oh! Kaiserin Elisabeth!" and again bowed his head towards the fiacre-door, when the driver addressed further speech to him, so diffuse and so presumably unnecessary, that Colonel Kenton merely repeated, with rising impatience, "Kaiserin Elisabeth, — Kaiserin Elisabeth, I tell you!" and getting in shut the fiacre-door after him.

The driver remained a moment in mumbled soliloquy; then he smacked his whip and drove rapidly away. They were aware of nothing outside but the starlit winter morning in unknown streets, till they plunged at last under an archway and drew up at a sort of lodge door, from which issued an example of the universal gold-cap-banded Continental hotel *portier*, so like all others in Europe that

it seemed idle for him to be leading an individual existence. He took the colonel's passport and summoned a waiter, who went bowing before them up a staircase more or less grandiose, and led them to a pleasant chamber, whither he sent directly a woman servant. She bade them a hearty good-morning in her tongue, and, kneeling down before the tall porcelain stove, kindled from her apronful of blocks and sticks a fire that soon penetrated the travellers with a rich comfort. It was of course too early yet to think of breakfast, but it was fortunately not too late to think of sleep. They were both very tired, and it was almost noon when they woke. The colonel had the fire rekindled, and he ordered breakfast to be served them in their room. "Beefsteak and coffee—here!" he said, pointing to the table; and as he made Mrs. Kenton snug near the stove he expatiated in her own terms upon the perfect loveliness of the whole affair, and the touch of nature that made coffee and beefsteak the same in every language. It seemed that the Kaiserin Elisabeth knew how to serve such a breakfast in faultless taste; and they sat long over it, in that sense of sovereign satisfaction which beef-

steak and coffee in your own room can best give. At last the colonel rose briskly and announced the order of the day. They were to go here, they were to stop there; they were to see this, they were to do that.

"Nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Kenton. "I am not going out at all to-day. It 's too cold; and if we are to push on to Trieste to-morrow, I shall need the whole day to get a little rested. Besides, I have some jobs of mending to do that can't be put off any longer."

The colonel listened with an air of joyous admiration. "Bessie," said he, "this is inspiration. *I* don't want to see their old town; and I shall ask nothing better than to spend the day with you here at our own fireside. You can sew, and I—I 'll *read* to you, Bessie!" This was a little too gross; even Mrs. Kenton laughed at this; the act of reading being so abhorrent to Colonel Kenton's active temperament that he was notorious for his avoidance of all literature except newspapers. In about ten minutes, passed in an agreeable idealisation of his purpose, which came in that time to include the perusal of all the books on Italy he had picked up on their journey, the colonel said

he would go down and ask the portier if they had the New York papers.

When he returned, somewhat disconsolate, to say they had not, and had apparently never heard of the *Herald* or *Tribune*, his wife smiled subtly: "Then I suppose you 'll have to go to the consul's for them."

"Why, Bessie, it isn't a thing I should have suggested; I can't bear the thoughts of leaving you here alone; but as you *say!* No, I 'll tell you: I 'll not go for the New York papers, but I will just step round and call upon the representative of the country — pay my respects to him, you know — if you *wish* it. But I 'd far rather spend the time here with you, Bessie, in our cosy little boudoir; I would, indeed."

Mrs. Kenton now laughed outright, and — it was a tremendous sarcasm for her — asked him if he were not afraid the example of the Black Forest was becoming infectious.

"Oh, come now, Bessie; no joking," pleaded the colonel, in mock distress. "I 'll tell you what, my dear, the head waiter here speaks English like a—an Ollendorff; and if you get to feeling a little lonesome while I 'm out, you can just ring and order something from him, you know. It will

cheer you up to hear the sound of your native tongue in a foreign land. But, pshaw! *I* shan't be gone a minute!"

By this time the colonel had got on his overcoat and gloves, and had his hat in one hand, and was leaning over his wife, resting the other hand on the back of the chair in which she sat warming the toes of her slippers at the draught of the stove. She popped him a cheery little kiss on his moustache, and gave him a small push: "Stay as long as you like, Ned. I shall not be in the least lonesome. I shall do my mending, and then I shall take a nap, and by that time it will be dinner. You needn't come back before dinner. What hour is the table-d'hôte?"

"Oh!" cried the colonel, guiltily. "The fact is, I wasn't going to tell you; I thought it would vex you so much; there *is* no table-d'hôte here, and never was. Bradshaw has been depraved by the moral-atmosphere of Germany. I'd as soon trust Baedeker after this."

"Well, never mind," said Mrs. Kenton. "We can tell them to bring us what they like for dinner, and we can have it whenever *we* like."

"Bessie!" exclaimed the colonel; "I

have not done justice to you, and I supposed I had. I knew how bright and beautiful you were, but I *did*n't think you were so amiable. I didn't, indeed. This is a real surprise," he said, getting out at the door. He opened it to add that he would be back in an hour, and then he went his way, with the light heart of a husband who has a day to himself with his wife's full approval.

At the consulate a still greater surprise awaited Colonel Kenton. This was the consul himself, who proved to be an old companion-in-arms, and into whose awful presence the colonel was ushered by a *Hausmeister* in a cocked hat and a gold-braided uniform finer than that of all the American major-generals put together. The friends both shouted "Hollo!" and "*You* don't say so!" and threw back their heads and laughed.

"Why, didn't you know I was here?" demanded the consul when the hard work of greeting was over. "I thought everybody knew that."

"Oh, I knew you were rusting out in some of these Dutch towns, but I never supposed it was Vienna. But that doesn't make any difference, so long as you *are* here." At this

they smacked each other on the knees, and laughed again. That carried them by a very rough point in their astonishment, and they now composed themselves to the pleasure of telling each other how they happened to be then and there, with glances at their personal history when they were making it together in the field.

"Well, now, what are you going to do the rest of the day?" asked the consul at last, with a look at his watch. "As I understand it, you 're going to spend it with me, somehow. The question is, how would you like to spend it?"

"This is a handsome offer, Davis; but I don't see how I 'm to manage, exactly," replied the colonel, for the first time distinctly recalling the memory of Mrs. Kenton. "My wife wouldn't know what had become of me, you know."

"Oh, yes, she would," retorted the consul with a bachelor's ignorant ease of mind on a point of that kind. "We 'll go round and take her with us."

The colonel gravely shook his head. "She wouldn't go, old fellow. She 's in for a day's rest and odd jobs. I 'll tell you what, I 'll just drop round and let her know I 've found

you, and then come back again. You 'll dine with us, won't you?" Colonel Kenton had not always found old comradeship a bond between Mrs. Kenton and his friends, but he believed he could safely chance it with Davis, whom she had always rather liked, —with such small regard as a lady's devotion to her husband leaves her for his friends.

"Oh, I 'll *dine* with you fast enough," said his friend. "But why don't you send a note to Mrs. Kenton to say that we 'll be round together, and save yourself the bother? Did you come here alone?"

"Bless your heart, no! I forgot him. The poor devil 's out there, cooling his heels on your stairs all this time. I came with a complete guide to Vienna. Can't you let him in out of the weather a minute?"

"We 'll have him in, so that he can take your note back; but he doesn't expect to be decently treated; they don't, here. You just sit down and write it," said the consul, pushing the colonel into his own chair before his desk, and when the colonel had superscribed his note, he called in the *Lohndiener*, —patient, hat in hand,—and, "Where are you stopping?" he asked the colonel.

"Oh, I forgot that. At the Kaiserin Elisabeth. I'll just write it"—

"Never mind; we'll tell him where to take it. See here," added the consul in a serviceable Viennese German of his own construction, "Take this to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, quick," and as the man looked up in a dull surprise, "Do you hear? The Kaiserin Elisabeth!"

"*I* don't know what it is about that hotel," said the colonel, when the man had meekly bowed himself away, with a hat that swept the ground in honour of a handsome drink-money; "but the mention of it always seems to awaken some sort of reluctance in the minds of the lower classes. Our driver wanted to enter into conversation with me about it this morning at three o'clock, and I had to be pretty short with him. If you don't know the language, it isn't so difficult to be short in German as I've heard. And another curious thing is that Bradshaw says the Kaiserin Elisabeth has a table-d'hôte, and the head waiter says she hasn't, and never did have."

"Oh, you can't trust anybody in Europe," said the consul, sententiously. "I'd leave Bradshaw and the waiter to fight it out

among themselves. We 'll get back in time to order a dinner,—it 's always better, and then we can dine alone, and have a good time."

"They couldn't keep us from having a good time at a table-d'hôte, even. But I don't mind."

By this time, they had got on their hats and coats and sallied forth. They first went to a café and had some of that famous Viennese coffee ; and then they went to the imperial and municipal arsenals, and viewed those collections of historical bric-à-brac, including the head of the unhappy Turkish general who was strangled by his sovereign because he failed to take Vienna in 1683. This from familiarity had no longer any effect upon the consul, but it gave Colonel Kenton prolonged pause. "I should have preferred a subordinate position in the sultan's army, I believe," he said. "Why, Davis, what a museum we could have had out of the Army of the Potomac alone, if Lincoln had been as particular as that sultan !"

From the arsenals they went to visit the parade-ground of the garrison, and came in time to see a manœuvre of the troops, at

which they looked with the frank respect and reserved superiority with which our veterans seem to regard the military of Europe. Then they walked about and noted the principal monuments of the city, and strolled along the promenades and looked at the handsome officers and the beautiful women. Colonel Kenton admired the life and the gay movement everywhere; since leaving Paris he had seen nothing so much like New York. But he did not like their shovelling up the snow into carts everywhere and dumping all that fine sleighing into the Danube. "By the way," said his friend, "let's go over into Leopoldstadt, and see if we can't scare up a sleigh for a little turn in the suburbs."

"It's getting late, isn't it?" asked the colonel.

"Not so late as it looks. You know we haven't the high American sun, here."

Colonel Kenton was having such a good time that he felt no trouble about his wife, sitting over her mending in the Kaiserin Elisabeth, and he yielded joyfully, thinking how much she would like to hear about the suburbs of Vienna: a husband will go through almost any pleasure in order to give his wife an entertaining account of it afterwards;

besides, a bachelor companionship is confusing: it makes many things appear right and feasible which are perhaps not so. It was not till their driver, who had turned out of the beaten track into a wayside drift to make room for another vehicle, attempted to regain the road by too abrupt a movement, and the shafts of their sledge responded with a loud crick-crack, that Colonel Kenton perceived the error into which he had suffered himself to be led. At three miles' distance from the city, and with the winter twilight beginning to fall, he felt the pang of a sudden remorse. It grew sorer with every homeward step and with each successive failure to secure a conveyance for their return. In fine, they trudged back to Leopoldstadt, where an absurd series of discomfitures awaited them in their attempts to get a fiacre over into the main city. They visited all the stands known to the consul, and then they were obliged to walk. But they were not tired, and they made their distance so quickly that Colonel Kenton's spirits rose again. He was able for the first time to smile at their misadventure, and some misgivings as to how Mrs. Kenton might stand affected towards a guest under the circumstances yielded to the thought of

how he should make her laugh at them both. "Good old Davis!" mused the colonel, and affectionately linked his arm through that of his friend, and they stamped through the brilliantly lighted streets gay with uniforms and the picturesque costumes with which the Levant at Vienna encounters the London and Paris fashions. Suddenly the consul arrested their movement. "Didn't you say you were stopping at the Kaiserin Elisabeth?"

"Why, yes; certainly."

"Well, it 's just around the corner, here." The consul turned him about, and in another minute they walked under an archway into a court-yard, and were met by the portier at the door of his room with an inquiring obeisance.

Colonel Kenton started. The cap and the cap-band were the same; and it was to all intents and purposes the same portier who had bowed him away in the morning; but the face was different. On noting this fact Colonel Kenton observed so general a change in the appointments and even architecture of the place that, "Old fellow," he said to the consul, "you 've made a little mistake: this isn't the Kaiserin Elisabeth."

The consul referred the matter to the

portier. Perfectly ; that was the Kaiserin Elisabeth. "Well, then," said the colonel, "tell him to have us shown to my room." The portier discovered a certain embarrassment when the colonel's pleasure was made known to him, and ventured something in reply which made the consul smile.

"Look here, Kenton," he said, "*you*'ve made a little mistake, this time. You're not stopping at the Kaiserin Elisabeth !"

"Oh, pshaw ! Come, now ! Don't bring the consular dignity so low as to enter into a practical joke with a hotel porter. It won't do. We got into Vienna this morning at three, and drove straight to the Kaiserin Elisabeth. We had a room and fire, and breakfast about noon. Tell him who I am, and what I say."

The consul did so, the portier slowly and respectfully shaking his head at every point. When it came to the name, he turned to his books, and shook his head yet more impressively. Then he took down a letter, spelled its address, and handed it to the colonel : it was his own note to Mrs. Kenton. That quite crushed him. He looked at it in a dull, mechanical way, and nodded his head with compressed lips. Then he scanned the por-

tier, and glanced round once more at the bedevilled architecture. "Well," said he, at last, "there 's a mistake somewhere. Unless there are two Kaiserin Elisabeths— Davis, ask him if there are two Kaiserin Elisabeths."

The consul compassionately put the question, received with something like grief by the portier. Impossible!

"Then I'm not stopping at either of them," continued the colonel. "So far, so good, — if you want to call it *good*. The question is now, if I 'm not stopping at the Kaiserin Elisabeth," he demanded, with sudden heat and raising his voice, "how the devil did I get there?"

The consul at this broke into a fit of laughter so violent that the portier retired a pace or two from these maniacs and took up a safe position within his door-way. "You didn't — you didn't — get there!" shrieked the consul. "That 's what made the whole trouble. You—you meant well, but you got somewhere else." He took out his handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes.

The colonel did not laugh; he had no real pleasure in the joke. On the contrary, he treated it as a serious business. "Very

well," said he, "it will be proved next that I never told that driver to take me to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, as it appears that I never got there and am not stopping there. Will you be good enough to tell me," he asked, with polished sarcasm, "where I *am* stopping, and why, and how?"

"I wish with all my heart I could," gasped his friend, catching his breath, "but I can't, and the only way is to go round to the principal hotels till we hit the right one. It won't take long. Come!" He passed his arm through that of the colonel, and made an explanation to the portier, as if accounting for the vagaries of some harmless eccentric he had in charge. Then he pulled his friend gently away, who yielded after a survey of the portier and the court-yard with a frown in which an indignant sense of injury quite eclipsed his former bewilderment. He had still this defiant air when they came to the next hotel, and used the portier with so much severity on finding that he was not stopping there, either, that the consul was obliged to protest: "If you behave in that way, Kenton, I won't go with you. The man's perfectly innocent of your stopping at the wrong place; and some of

these hotel people know me, and I won't stand your bullying them. And I tell you what: you 've got to let me have my laugh out, too. You know the thing 's perfectly ridiculous, and there 's no use putting any other face on it." The consul did not wait for leave to have his laugh out, but had it out in a series of furious gusts. At last the colonel himself joined him, ruefully.

"Of course," said he, "I know I 'm an ass, and I wouldn't mind it on my own account. *I* would as soon roam round after that hotel the rest of the night as not, but I can't help feeling anxious about my wife. I 'm afraid she 'll be getting very uneasy at my being gone so long. She 's all alone, there, wherever it is, and"—

"Well, but she 's got your note. She 'll understand"—

"What a fool *you* are, Davis! *There 's* my note!" cried the colonel, opening his fist and showing a very small wad of paper in his palm. "She 'd have got my note if she 'd been at the Kaiserin Elisabeth, but she 's no more there than I am."

"Oh!" said his friend, sobered at this. "To be sure! Well?"

"Well, it 's no use trying to tell a man

like you. But I suppose that she's simply distracted by this time. You don't know what a woman is, and how she can suffer about a little matter when she gives her mind to it."

"Oh!" said the consul again, very contritely. "I 'm very sorry I laughed; but"—here he looked into the colonel's gloomy face with a countenance contorted with agony—"this only makes it the more ridiculous, you know," and he reeled away drunk with the mirth which filled him from head to foot. But he repented again, and with a superhuman effort so far subdued his transports as merely to quake internally, and tremble all over, as he led the way to the next hotel, arm in arm with the bewildered and embittered colonel. He encouraged the latter with much genuine sympathy, and observed a proper decorum in his interviews with one portier after another, formulating the colonel's story very neatly, and explaining at the close that this American Herr, who had arrived at Vienna before daylight, and directed his driver to take him to the Kaiserin Elisabeth, and had left his hotel at one o'clock in the belief that it was the Kaiserin Elisabeth, felt now an added eager-

ness to know what his hotel really was from the circumstance that his wife was there quite alone, and in probable distress at his long absence. At first Colonel Kenton took a lively interest in this statement of his case, and prompted the consul with various remarks and sub-statements; he was grateful for the compassion generally shown him by the portiers, and he strove with himself to give some account of the exterior and locality of his mysterious hotel. But the fact was that he had not so much as looked behind him when he quitted it, and knew nothing about its appearance; and gradually the reiteration of the points of his misadventure to one portier after another began to be as "a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong." His personation of an American Herr in great trouble of mind was an entire failure, except as illustrating the national apathy of countenance when under the influence of *strong* emotion. He ceased to take part in the consul's efforts in his behalf; the whole abominable affair seemed as far beyond his forecast or endeavour as some result of malign enchantment; and there was no such thing as carrying off the tragedy with self-respect. Distressing as it was,

there could be no question but it was entirely ridiculous; he hung his head with shame before the portiers at being a party to it; he no longer felt like resenting Davis's amusement; he only wondered that he could keep his face in relating the idiotic mischance. Each successive failure to discover his lodging confirmed him in his humiliation and despair. Very likely there was a way out of the difficulty, but he did not know it. He became at last almost an indifferent spectator of the consul's perseverance. He began to look back with incredulity at the period of his life passed before entering the fatal fiacre that morning. He received the final portier's rejection with something like a personal derision.

"That's the last place I can think of," said the consul, wiping his brow as they emerged from the court-yard, for he had grown very warm with walking so much.

"Oh, all right," said the colonel languidly.

"But we won't give it up. Let's go in here and get some coffee, and think it over a bit." They were near one of the principal cafés, which was full of people smoking, and drinking the Viennese *mélange* out of tumblers.

"By all means," assented Colonel Kenton with inconsequent courtliness, "think it over. It 's all that 's left us."

Matters did not look so dark, quite, after a tumbler of coffee with milk, but they did not continue to brighten so much as they ought with the cigars. "Now let us go through the facts of the case," said the consul, and the colonel wearily reproduced his original narrative with every possible circumstance. "But you know all about it," he concluded. "I don't see any end of it. I don't see but I 'm to spend the rest of my life in hunting up a hotel that professes to be the Kaiserin Elisabeth, and isn't. I never knew anything like it."

"It certainly has the charm of novelty," gloomily assented the consul; it must be owned that his gloom was a respectful feint. "I have heard of men running away from their hotels, but I never did hear of a hotel running away from a man before now. Yes —hold on! I have, too. Aladdin's palace —and with Mrs. Aladdin in it, at that! It's a parallel case." Here he abandoned himself as usual, while Colonel Kenton viewed his mirth with a dreary grin. When he at last caught his breath, "I beg your pardon, I do

indeed," the consul implored. "I know just how you feel, but of course it 's coming out right. We 've been to all the hotels I know of, but there must be others. We 'll get some more names and start at once ; and if the genie has dropped your hotel anywhere this side of Africa we shall find it. If the worst comes to the worst, you can stay at my house to-night and start new to-m— Oh, I forgot !—Mrs. Kenton ! Really, the whole thing is such an amusing muddle that I can't seem to get over it." He looked at Kenton with tears in his eyes, but contained himself and decorously summoned a waiter, who brought him whatever corresponds to a city directory in Vienna. "There !" he said, when he had copied into his note-book a number of addresses, "I don't think your hotel will escape us this time," and discharging his account he led the way to the door, Colonel Kenton listlessly following.

The wretched husband was now suffering all the anguish of a just remorse, and the heartlessness of his behaviour in going off upon his own pleasure the whole afternoon and leaving his wife alone in a strange hotel to pass the time as she might was no less a

poignant reproach, because it seemed so inconceivable in connection with what he had always taken to be the kindness and unselfishness of his character. We all know the sensation, and I know none, on the whole, so disagreeable, so little flattering, so persistent when once it has established itself in the ill-doer's consciousness. To find out that you are not so good or generous or magnanimous as you thought, is, next to having other people find it out, probably the unfriendliest discovery that can be made. But I suppose it has its uses. Colonel Kenton now saw the unhandsomeness of his leaving his wife at all, and he beheld in its true light his shabbiness in not going back to tell her he had found his old friend, and was to bring him to dinner. The Lohndiener would of course have taken him straight to his hotel, and he would have been spared this shameful exposure which, he knew well enough, Davis would never forget, but would tell all his life with an ever increasing garniture of fiction. He cursed his weakness in allowing himself to dawdle about those arsenals and that parade-ground, and to be so far misguided by a hardened bachelor as to admire certain yellow-haired

German and black-haired Hungarian women on the promenade; when he came to think of going out in that sledge, it was with anathema maranatha. He groaned in spirit, but he owned that he was rightly punished, though it seemed hard that his wife should be punished too; and then he went on miserably to figure first her slight surprise at his being gone so long; then her vague uneasiness and her conjectures; then her dawning apprehensions and her helplessness; her probable sending to the consulate to find out what had become of him; her dismay at learning nothing of him there; her waiting and waiting in wild dismay as the moments and hours went by; her frenzied running to the door at every step, and her despair when it proved not his. He had seen her suffering from less causes. And where was she? In what low, shabby tavern had he left her? He choked with rage and grief, and could hardly speak to the gentleman, a naturalised fellow-citizen of Vienna, to whom he found the consul introducing him.

"I wonder if you can't help us," said the consul. "My friend here is the victim of a curious annoyance," and he stated the case in language so sympathetic and decorous as

to restore some small shreds of the colonel's self-respect.

"Ah," said their new acquaintance, who was mercifully not a man of humour, or too polite to seem so, "that 's another trick of those scamps of fiacre-drivers. He took you purposely to the wrong hotel, and was probably fee'd by the landlord for bringing you. But why should you make yourselves so much trouble? You know Colonel Kenton's landlord had to send his name to the police as soon as he came, and you can get his address there at once."

"Good-bye!" said the consul very hastily, with a crest-fallen air. "Come along, Kenton."

"What did he send my name to the police for?" demanded the colonel, in the open air.

"Oh! It 's a form. They do it with all travellers. It 's merely to secure the imperial government against your machinations."

"And do you mean to say you ought to have known," cried the colonel, halting him, "that you could have found out where I was from the police at once, before we had walked all over this moral vineyard, and wasted half a precious lifetime?"

"Kenton," contritely admitted the other, "I never happened to think of it."

"Well, Davis, you're a pretty consul!" That was all the colonel said, and though his friend was voluble in self-exculpation and condemnation, he did not answer him a word till they arrived at the police-office. A few brief questions and replies between the commissary and the consul solved the long mystery, and Colonel Kenton had once more a hotel over his head. The commissary certified to the respectability of the place, but invited the colonel to prosecute the driver of the fiacre in behalf of the general public, which seemed so right a thing that the colonel entered into it with zeal, and then suddenly relinquished it, remembering that he had not the rogue's number, that he had not so much as looked at him, and that he knew no more what manner of man he was than his own image in a glass. Under the circumstances, the commissary admitted that it was impossible, and as to bringing the landlord to justice, nothing could be proved against him.

"Will you ask him," said the colonel, "the outside price of a first-class assault and battery in Vienna?" The consul put

as much of this idea into German as the language would contain, which was enough to make the commissary laugh and shake his head warningly.

"It wouldn't do, he says, Kenton; it isn't the custom of the country."

"Very well, then, I don't see why we should occupy his time." He gave his hand to the commissary, whom he would have liked to embrace, and then hurried forth again with the consul. "There is one little thing that worries me still," he said. "I suppose Mrs. Kenton is simply crazy by this time."

"Is she of a very—nervous—disposition?" faltered the consul.

"Nervous? Well, if you could witness the expression of her emotions in regard to mice, you wouldn't ask that question, Davis."

At this desolating reply the consul was mute for a moment. Then he ventured: "I've heard—or read, I don't know which—that women have more real fortitude than men, and that they find a kind of moral support in an actual emergency that they wouldn't find in—mice."

"Pshaw!" answered the colonel. "You wait till you see Mrs. Kenton."

"Look here, Kenton," said the consul, seriously, and stopping short. "I've been thinking that perhaps—I—I had better dine with you some other day. The fact is, the situation now seems so purely domestic that a third person, you know"—

"Come along!" cried the colonel. "I want you to help me out of this scrape. I'm going to leave that hotel as soon as I can put my things together, and you've got to browbeat the landlord for me, while I go up and reassure my wife long enough to get her out of that den of thieves. What did you say the scoundrelly name was?"

"The Gasthof zum Wilden Manne."

"And what does Wildun Manny mean?"

"The Sign of the Savage, we should make it, I suppose: the Wild Man."

"Well, I don't know whether it was named after me or not, but if I'd found that sign anywhere for the last four or five hours, I should have known it for home. There hasn't been any wilder man in Vienna since the town was laid out, I reckon; and I don't believe there ever was a wilder woman anywhere than Mrs. Kenton is at this instant."

Arrived at the Sign of the Savage, Colonel Kenton left his friend below with the portier,

and mounting the stairs three steps at a time flew to his room. Flinging open the door, he beheld his wife dressed in one of her best silks, before the mirror, bestowing some last prinks, touching her back hair with her hand, and twitching the bow at her throat into perfect place. She smiled at him in the glass, and said, "Where 's Captain Davis?"

"Captain Davis?" gasped the colonel, dry-tongued with anxiety and fatigue. "Oh! *He 's* down there. He *'ll* be up directly."

She turned and came forward to him: "How do you like it?" Then she advanced near enough to encounter the moustache: "Why, how heated and tired you look!"

"Yes, yes,—we 've been walking. I—I'm rather late, ain't I, Bessie?"

"About an hour. I ordered dinner at six, and it 's nearly seven now." The colonel started; he had not dared to look at his watch, and he had supposed it must be about ten o'clock; it seemed years since his search for the hotel had begun. But he said nothing; he felt that in some mysterious and unmerited manner Heaven was having mercy upon him, and he accepted the grace in the sneaking way we all accept mercy. "I knew you 'd

stay longer than you expected, when you found it was Davis."

"How did you know it was Davis?" asked the colonel, blindly feeling his way.

Mrs. Kenton picked up her Almanach de Gotha. "It has all the consular and diplomatic corps in it."

"I won't laugh at it any more," said the colonel humbly. "Weren't you—uneasy, Bessie?"

"No. I mended away, here, and fussed round the whole afternoon, putting the trunks to rights, and I got out this dress and ran a bit of lace into the collar; and then I ordered dinner, for I knew you'd bring the captain; and I took a nap, and by that it was nearly dinner time."

"Oh!" said the colonel.

"Yes; and the head waiter was as polite as peas; they've all been very attentive. I shall certainly recommend everybody to the Kaiserin Elisabeth."

"Yes," assented the wretched man. "I reckon it 's about the best hotel in Vienna."

"Well, now, go and get Captain Davis. You can bring him right in here; we're only travellers. Why, what makes you act so queerly? Has anything happened?"

Mrs. Kenton was surprised to find herself gathered into her husband's arms and embraced with a rapture for which she could see no particular reason.

"Bessie," said her husband, "I told you this morning that you were amiable as well as bright and beautiful; I now wish to add that you are sensible. I'm awfully ashamed of being gone so long. But the fact is we had a little accident. Our sleigh broke down out in the country, and we had to walk back.

"Oh, you poor old fellow! No wonder you look tired."

He accepted the balm of her compassion like a candid and innocent man: "Yes, it was pretty rough. But *I* didn't mind it, except on your account. I thought the delay would make you uneasy." With that he went out to the head of the stairs and called, "Davis!"

"Yes!" responded the consul, and he ascended the stairs in such trepidation that he tripped and fell part of the way up.

"Have you been saying anything to that man about my going away?"

"No, I've simply been blowing him up

on the fiacre-driver's account. He swears they are innocent of collusion. But of course they 're not."

"Well, all right. Mrs. Kenton is waiting for us to go to dinner. And look here," whispered the colonel, "don't you open your mouth, except to put something into it, till I give you the cue."

The dinner was charming, and had suffered little or nothing from the delay. Mrs. Kenton was in raptures with it, and after a thimbleful of the good Hungarian wine had attuned her tongue, she began to sing the praises of the Kaiserin Elisabeth.

"The K—," began the consul, who had hitherto guarded himself very well. But the colonel arrested him at that letter with a terrible look. He returned the look with a glance of intelligence, and resumed: "The Kaiserin Elisabeth has the best cook in Vienna."

"And everybody about has such nice honest faces," said Mrs. Kenton. "I 'm sure I couldn't have felt anxious if you hadn't come till midnight: I knew I was perfectly secure here."

"Quite right, quite right," said the consul. "All classes of the Viennese are so

faithful. Now, I dare say you could have trusted that driver of yours, who brought you here before daylight this morning, with untold gold. No stranger need fear any of the tricks ordinarily practised upon travellers in Vienna. They are a truthful, honest, virtuous population,—like all the Germans, in fact."

"There, Ned! What do you say to that, with your Black Forest nonsense?" triumphed Mrs. Kenton.

Colonel Kenton laughed sheepishly: "Well, I take it all back, Bessie. I wasn't quite satisfied with the appearance of the Black Forest country when I came to it," he explained to the consul, "and Mrs. Kenton and I had our little joke about the fraudulent nature of the Germans.'

"*Our* little joke!" retorted his wife. "I wish we were going to stay longer in Vienna. They say you have to make bargains for *everything* in Italy, and here I suppose I could shop just as at home."

"Precisely," said the consul; the Viennese shopkeepers being the most notorious Jews in Europe.

"Oh, we can't stop longer than till the morning," remarked the colonel. "I shall

be sorry to leave Vienna and the Kaiserin Elisabeth, but we must go."

"Better hang on a while; you won't find many hotels like it, Kenton," observed his friend.

"No, I suppose not," sighed the colonel; "but I'll get the address of their correspondent in Venice and stop there."

Thus these craven spirits combined to delude and deceive the helpless woman of whom half an hour before they had stood in such abject terror. If they had found her in hysterics they would have pitied and respected her, but her good sense, her amiability and noble self-control subjected her to their shameless mockery.

Colonel Kenton followed the consul downstairs when he went away, and pretended to justify himself. "I'll tell her one of these days," he said, "but there's no use distressing her now."

"I didn't understand you at first," said the other. "But I see now it was the only way."

"Yes; saves needless suffering. I say, Davis, this is about an even thing between us? A United States consul ought to be of some use to his fellow-citizens abroad, and

if he allows them to walk their legs off hunting up a hotel which he could have found at the first police-station if *he had happened to think of it*, he won't be very anxious to tell the joke, I suppose?"

"I don't propose to write home to the papers about it."

"All right." So, in the court-yard of the Wild Man they parted. Long after that Mrs. Kenton continued to recommend people to the Kaiserin Elisabeth. Even when the truth was made known to her she did not see much to laugh at. "I'm sure I was always very glad the colonel didn't tell me at once," she said, "for if I had known what I had been through, I certainly *should* have gone distracted."

Edinburgh University Press
T. AND A. CONSTABLE, PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY.

00140934

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018